WAYLON & WILLIE

The Full Story in Words and Pictures of Waylon Jennings & Willie Nelson

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Bob Allen

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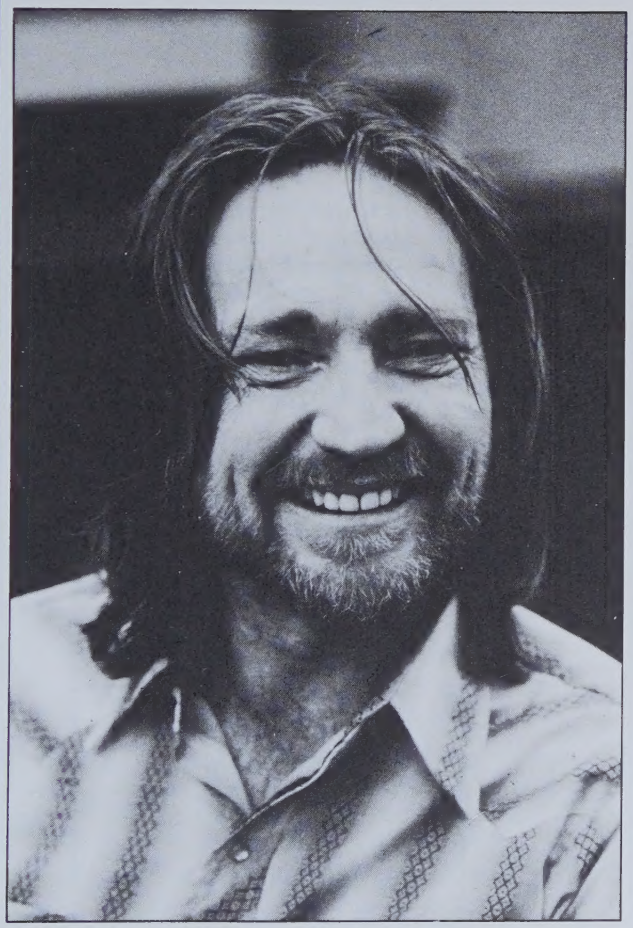

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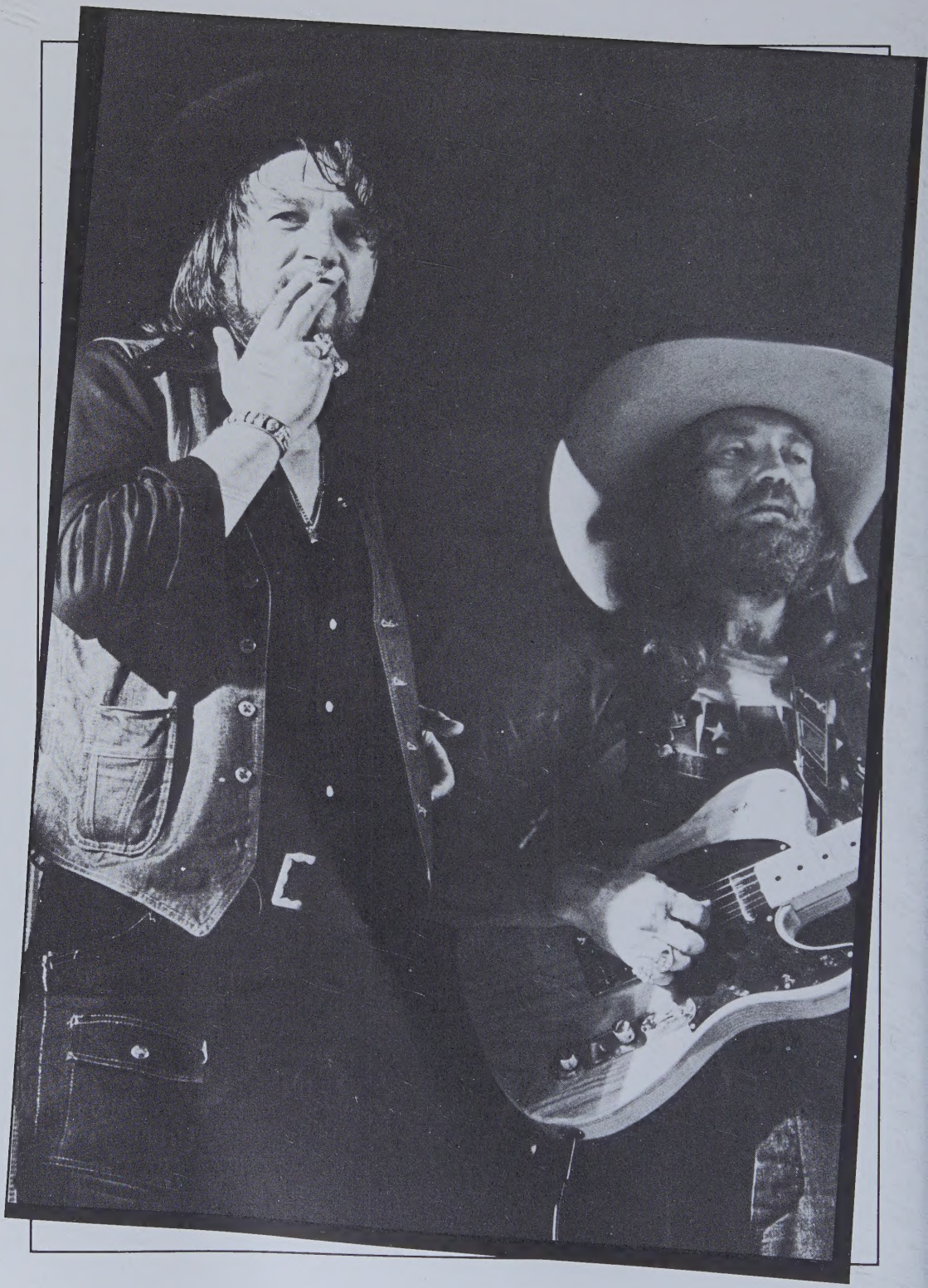

INTRODUCTION

WAYLON JENNINGS AND Willie Nelson. Together, they look like dustbowl compatriots or frontier era riverboat gamblers. They are the Pancho and Cisco of modern country music, a latter day Butch Cassidy and Sundance Kid. Though their music is vital and contemporary, they appear to us as throwbacks to a mythopoetic era when the individual was in the forefront. In this age of saccharin and complexity, they are fundamentalists: they drink their coffee black and take their whiskey straight. They have clung almost religiously to their own musical heritage. With their bristling beards, long hair, and weather-beaten faces; their fondness for leather vests, worn Levi's bright headbands, and wide brimmed hats, they have struck a note of familiarity and excitement with the American public, who, in turn, have taken them to their hearts.

Willie and Waylon have passed forty; yet just a few years ago, both were still struggling artists, little known outside the southern country music circuit. Today, their faces are familiar to practically all of us. Their duet albums, as well as their subsequent solo albums, have soared well past

the million-sales mark. In 1979, they were honored with Grammy Awards.

Today, you are apt to see the two of them almost anywhere. Willie recently completed filming a supporting role in *The Electric Horseman*, which stars Robert Redford and Jane Fonda. Waylon and his band, the Waylors, are now recording the soundtrack and narration for the popular TV show, *The Dukes of Hazard,* and Waylon will appear, in an acting and singing role, in the Paramount film *Urban Cowboy* starring John Travolta. They have been featured on a number of national TV shows. More importantly, they have won over some of the nation's most influential and recalcitrant music critics: Robert Hillburn, Jack Hurst, and Chet Flippo.

After years of being misunderstood, Waylon and Willie have come of age. Before their ascendancy to national prominence, the mainstream of country music was riddled with formulaic music and had lost touch with most listeners under 30. But Waylon and Willie have changed all that. Their music is untamed, contemporary, and hints at things urgent and immediate, while drawing heavily from the fundamentals of country music. As a result, Waylon and Willie have become the closest thing that country music has to Jagger and Richards. When they finally did break through they were a breath of fresh air. The phenomenal sales of their albums caused Nashville to revamp its marketing concepts to acknowledge a new audience that had been overlooked.

THEY HAVE RESPONDED TO THE PRESSURE OF THEIR NEWFOUND WEALTH AND FAME IN VERY DIFFERENT WAYS.

Waylon and Willie are one of the most successful musical alliances ever to come down the pike; yet they are an odd couple. Spiritually they are as different as night and day, yet their histories and professional lives are quite similar. Though both are from Texas, Willie has lived there off and on for most of his life, while Waylon left home in the early sixties. Both men, in the early stages of their careers, moonlighted as disc jockeys. They were both bass players in someone else's band: Waylon with the late Buddy Holly, and Willie with country star Ray Price. Waylon became a recording artist as soon as he got to Nashville. Willie, because of his unusual vocal style, found it harder to get started as a singer. Instead, he amassed a small fortune writing hits for other people. When they sing harmony though, their voices fit together, despite the fact that their vocal styles are vastly different. Willie has a gravelly baritone reminiscent of a country church choir, but honed with twenty years worth of one-night stands in raucous roadhouses and honky-tonks. Waylon has an explosive, inflective bass with shrill tenor overtones. "Willie has a style of singing that is back phras-

ing," says Waylon (*Savannah Evening Press,* February 7, 1978). "To this day, I can't do it at all. . . .I tend to rush the beat. . . .If I try to imitate Willie onstage, they think the boy is losing his voice and his mind at the same time."

Willie, at 5'8" is a half a head shorter than Waylon. He has a warm, infectious smile and appears calm, unflappable, and at times, almost serene. Waylon, on the other hand, is tall and fidgety; for all the hundreds of times he's played before live audiences, he always seems slightly ill at ease. His movements are quick and feral; expressions barely flicker across his handsome, scowling face, partially hidden by his thick dark hair and beard. Volatile and exciting, his voice quickly fills his audience with an air of mystery and excitement. While Willie's charm lies in his generosity and benevolence toward his fans, Waylon's strength seems to come from

what he holds back. While performing he speaks little between songs, only occasionally does he smile. When he leaves the stage, he is still as much a mystery as he was when he went on.

With such vastly different personalities and musical styles, it's not surprising that Waylon and Willie have responded to the pressures of their newfound wealth and fame in very different ways.

The rise of Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson through the ranks of country music, from relative obscurity to the height of national success, is a story full of struggle. To some extent it is a familiar story of broken marriages, drug problems, disillusionment, and emotional burnouts. Their story is as indicative of the music industry's resistance to recognizing new talent, as it is of the hard work and dogged persistence of these two extremely creative men.

Willie Nelson: The Early Years

Chapter 1

[W]ILLIE HUGH NELSON, "THE Red Headed Stranger," was born in Abbot, Texas (population 375), April 30, 1933, the worst year of the Great Depression. His father was a mechanic who traveled a lot, and when Willie was a child, his mother left home to find work and never came back. Willie was raised by his grandparents and aunts. As a youngster, he worked in cotton patches for three dollars a day, alongside black fieldhands, and he was heavily influenced by the music he heard them singing. At a very early age, he began writing songs, and occasionally, he'd get up the nerve to sing one to his grandmother who wrote gospel songs.

Willie made his musical debut around age ten, playing guitar in polka bands in the bohemian towns of central Texas. "I thought I'd made it then," he jokingly told Joe Nick Patoski (*Hustler*, November, 1978). "I was makin' eight dollars a night, and that

was a lot of money. To me, a kid in Abbott, I was successful."

As Willie struggled through his early years, he worked at a number of menial jobs. He did a stint in the Air Force and served during the Korean War. For a short time, he attended Baylor University and majored in business. By the early 1950's, his various off-and-on-again professions included: teaching guitar, and Sunday school, selling used cars, and bibles, working as a plumber's helper, and singing in clubs around Fort Worth's rough and bloody Jacksboro Highway. The clubs along this strip were so rough that a chickenwire fence was often used as a barrier between the band and the audience and to control flying bottles and chairs. "There was this place called the County Dump," Paul English, Willie's lifelong friend, who has been a bandmember off and on, since the early days, recalled. (*New York Times Magazine*, March, 1978.) "They hired us to cover up the noise of this big dice game they were runnin' in the back room. Paid twenty-four dollars a week, playin' six nights. We played there nine months and saw two killings, [and] had at least one good fight every night."

Early in his career, Willie had to make a choice between two conflicting interests: teaching Sunday school or playing music in the local shit-kicker bars. "I don't know how they found out," he recalled (*Hustler*). "I was teaching Sunday school at the Metropolitan Baptist Church, and I was asked to either stop playin' honky-tonks or drop my Sunday school class. . . . Since Sunday school wasn't payin' me as much as the beer joints, I had to leave the church."

WILLIE'S DAUGHTER, LANA.

Right around this time, Willie married his first wife, Martha Mathews, a sixteen-year-old Cherokee Indian waitress. They had a daughter, Lana. The marriage was, to say the least, tempestuous. "We replayed Custer's Last Stand every night," he recalled (*Rocky Mountain News*, October, 1978). "One morning, she threw a fork at me across the breakfast table and it stuck in my belly. . . .Another time I came home drunk and fell across the bed. She sewed me up in a sheet as I lay there, then beat me with a broom. When I struggled free, she was in the car, fully packed, the kids in the back seat."

Eventually, this ill-fated marriage would end in divorce court. "I tried being like other people," said Willie (*Time*, September, 1978). "I tried to work and come home and watch TV. That just wasn't me."

In the middle of the 1950's, Willie embarked on another career as a disc jockey. Working for various stations across the country, he wandered as

far away as Vancouver, Washington, where he had a country-western program on KUAN that enjoyed high ratings. It was there in 1958, that Willie released his first record, a song he wrote himself, "No Place To Go." "I went down to the studio and made the record and had five hundred copies of 'em pressed and sold 'em on the air for a buck apiece," (*Hustler*). Eventually, the personally financed record, released on Willie's own label, sold about 2,000 copies.

Willie's career as a disc jockey spanned about seven years; from Vancouver, he returned to Fort Worth. By this time, his songwriting talents had grown. Unfortunately, his business acumen had not. The first song he sold was "Family Bible"; he let it go for $50, just to feed his family. The song eventually became a country classic, and with various artists recording it over the years, it sold millions of records. In 1959, he wrote another classic, "Night Life," and sold it in 1961 to three Houston businessmen for $150. "Night Life" was eventually recorded by more

than seventy artists, and sold over 30 million copies.

In a state of shock at the realization that you could actually *sell* songs for *money,* Willie bought a secondhand Buick, and, like countless others who would make the same pilgrimage in the years to come, he set out for Nashville, hoping to become a country music star.

In Nashville, where songwriters often spend years at a starvation level existence, Willie Nelson quickly hit paydirt. But it would be more than a decade and a half before he could realize his dream of becoming a recording artist. It was hard to believe, in the old days, that Willie would ever rise to the heights he has reached today: one of the nation's top-selling artists and a nationally known celebrity. There is little doubt that it was this sort of recognition that he wanted. "I even had my name paged in airports," (the *Washington Post*, April 25, 1978).

IN THE EARLY 1960s WILLIE WROTE SOME OF THE SONGS THAT TODAY ARE STANDARDS OF COUNTRY AND POP MUSIC.

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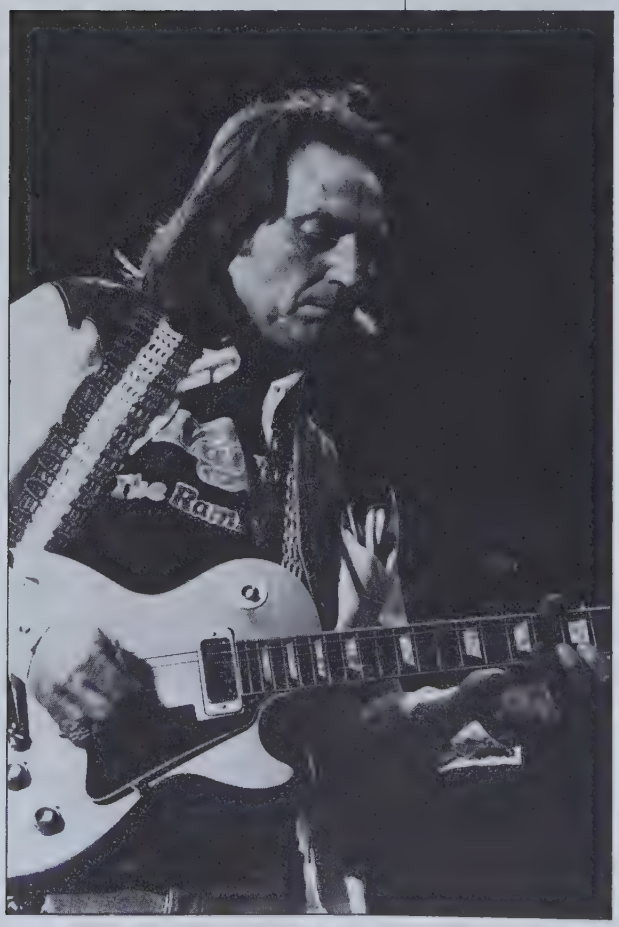


In his first days in Nashville, in the early 1960's, Willie wrote some of the songs that today are standards of country and pop music. (He estimates that he's written over 800 songs in the course of his long career.) At that time, Nashville had a healthy street scene, in which writers and artists mingled freely. Willie spent much of his free time at Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, one of the most popular hangouts and watering holes for musicians of the day. Eventually Willie's songs came to the attention of Hank Cochran, a top songwriter of that era. He was impressed enough with Willie to sign him as a writer with Pamper Publishing Company, which was partially owned by Ray Price, one of the earlier "countrypolitan" Nashville artists.

Ray Price became one of the first country artists to score a big hit with a Willie Nelson

composition. His version of "Night Life" became one of his all-time biggest records. In 1961, the late Patsy Cline, one of the leading female singers of the era who died in a plane crash while still in her twenties, had a tremendous hit with the Nelson original "Crazy" (more recently recorded by Linda Ronstadt). Faron Young, another country superstar of the day, had enduring success with "Hello Walls." One of Willie's most memorable songs, "Funny How Time Slips Away," was also written in 1961, and it has since been recorded by more than eighty different artists.

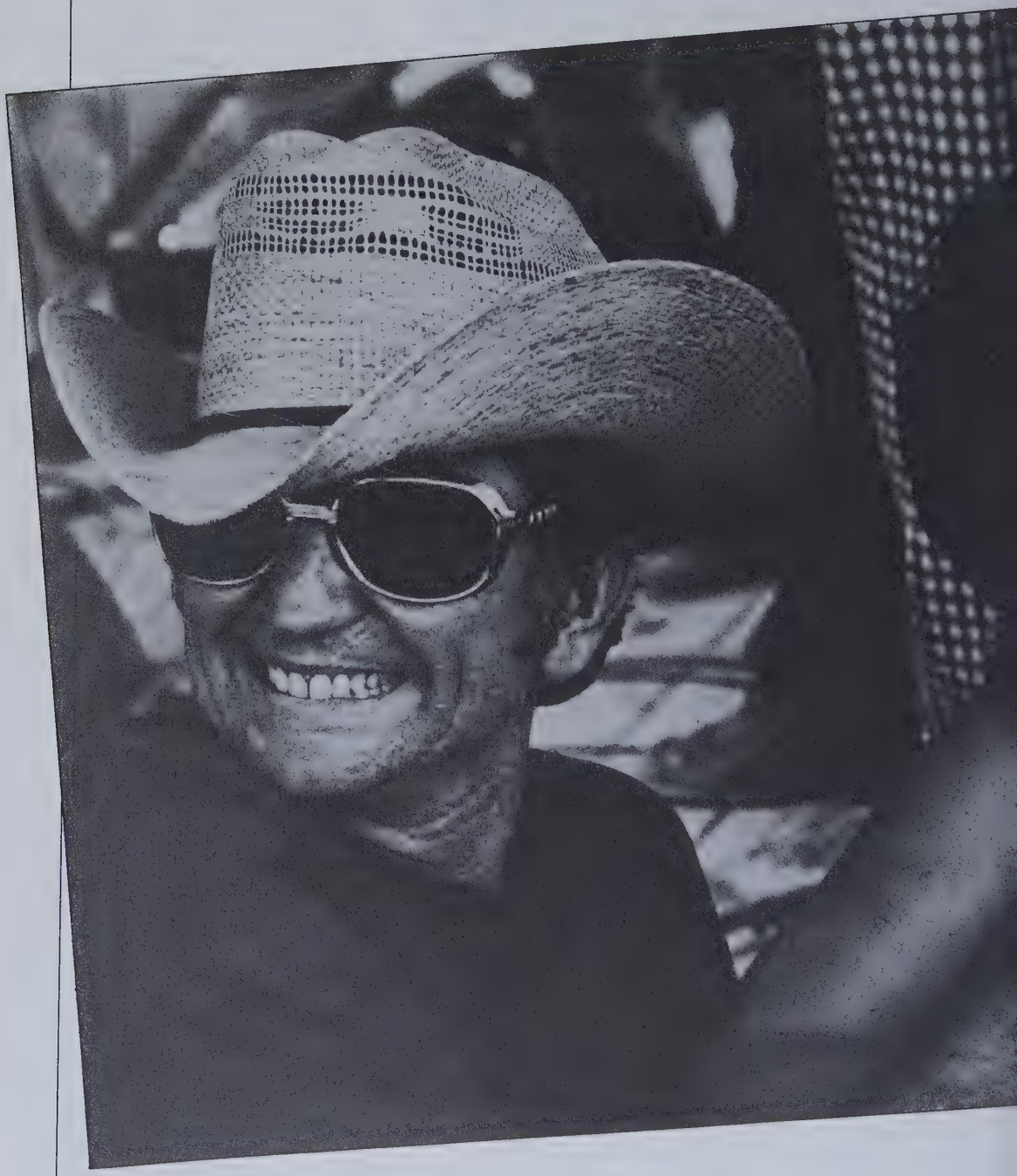
As the years went by, Willie's annual income from royalties rose into the six figures. Today, you have to draw a deep breath before you begin to recite the list of artists who have recorded his songs: Stevie Wonder, Perry Como, Elvis Presley, Kris Kristofferson, Leon Russell, Ray Charles, Roy Orbison, Lawrence Welk, Doris Day, Andy Williams, and Aretha Franklin. (Frank Sinatra recorded an entire album of Willie's songs, but it was never released, due to complications over publishing rights that didn't belong to Willie.) Long before he established himself as a recording artist, he had won the respect of many of his contemporaries, some of whom still consider him the best writer to ever hit Nashville. Chet Atkins, the world-renowned guitarist and

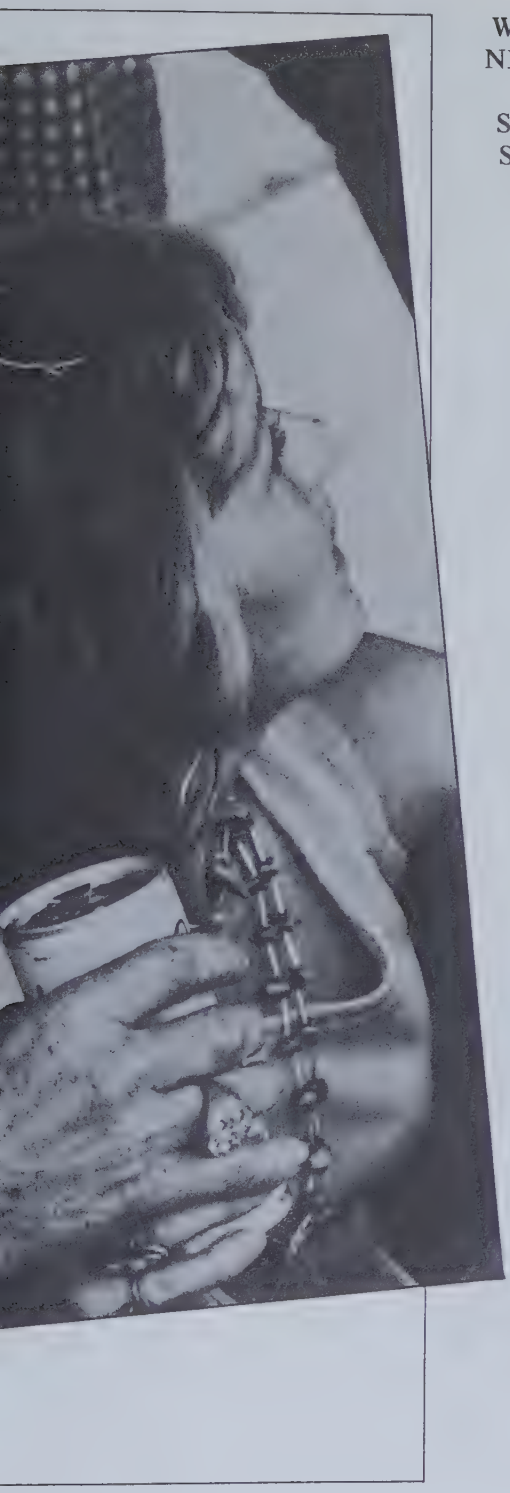
producer, has referred to him as "one of the greatest." Tom T. Hall, another leading artist/songwriter ("Harper Valley P.T.A.") has called him "the Shakespeare of country music." (In 1973, the Nashville Songwriters Association belatedly voted Willie into their exclusive Songwriters Hall of Fame.)

As Willie recalls his initial taste of success wasn't all that sweet. "All of the sudden, I had a lot of money," Willie told Susan Toepfer (*The New York Daily News Sunday Magazine,* February 4, 1979). "But it wasn't worth anything because of what I was going through. So I started throwing it away with both hands. When 'Hello Walls' hit, I was playing bass with Ray Price, making thirty dollars a day and I was flying to all the jobs, renting penthouses and suites, buying everybody dinner—while Ray Price was riding the bus with the rest of the guys. It didn't take me long to go through the first royalty check."

Shortly after his arrival in Nashville, he had married an aspiring singer named Shirley Collie. What Willie was "going through" was a second marriage that was every bit as mismatched and painful as the first one, which, like the first one, would eventually end in divorce.

The fact is, the creative drive for many of the most enduring songs that Willie wrote during this period seemed to





WILLIE NELSON AND SAMMI SMITH [★]

come from a deep-seated sense of personal misery. "What I was doing was kind of recording what was happening to me at the time," he told Chet Flippo (*Rolling Stone*, July 13, 1978). "I was going through a rough period when I wrote a lot of those songs, some traumatic experiences. I was going through a divorce, split-up, kids involved and everything. Fortunately, now I don't have those problems. But I went through those thirty negative years, wallowing in all kinds of misery and self-pity and guilt and all that shit. But out of it came the knowledge that everybody wallows in that same old shit—guilt and self-pity—and I just happened to write about it. There'd be no way to write a sad song unless you had really been sad."

Adding to Willie's emotional struggles during his early years in Nashville, was the nagging frustration of not being able to get anyone interested in him as a singer. They told him he sang funny, that his songs were too deep, had too many chords, and weren't about the right kind of subjects. He was completely at odds with the smooth, bland vocal style that was in demand at that time. Willie had developed a style of singing often referred to as "offbeat" phrasing; a jazz style of singing against or behind the beat of the song that was introduced into popular music by Frank Sinatra. "I used to sit around

listening to Sinatra records and I'd get to thinkin', 'Boy, he sure sounds nice'. Then I'd start hearing my songs that way, so I just started singing 'em like that.

"You know, I always thought I could sing pretty good," he added, "and I guess it kinda bothered me that nobody else thought so. . . .I was into a lot of negative thinking back then. I did a lot of bad things, got in fights with people, got divorced, all that stuff. My head was just pointed the wrong way, you know," (*New York Times* magazine, March 26, 1978).

On the strength of his songwriting achievements, Willie landed a recording contract with RCA Records. In 1962, he actually had a single record, "Touch Me," that reached the country top ten. But that was the first and last hit he was destined to have for another thirteen years until "Blue Eyes Cryin' In The Rain" became number one in 1975.

In his early efforts as a recording artist with RCA, Willie hardly made a splash in the pan. His albums (he recorded more than twenty of them during his first ten years in Nashville; most of them are long out of print, although RCA has, in recent years, begun rereleasing some of the material) went unpromoted by the company and were unnoticed by the public. RCA seemed to regard them as well-produced demo records, worth the studio time only in so far as they exposed his songs to other more "commercial" artists who might record them. Willie found himself bucking the traditional Nashville system, and for him, it was extremely discouraging.

HIS EARLY EFFORTS AS A RECORDING ARTIST AT RCA HARDLY MADE A SPLASH IN THE PAN.

"The executive producers and the record company producers and the agents had a very small opinion of the intelligence of people who listened to country music," Willie told Joe Nick Patoski (*Hustler*). "They felt they were not capable of hearin' words that were longer than three syllables or songs that had more than three chords. For a long time, they underestimated the intelligence of people. I think they were judgin' 'em by their own intelligence. As soon as I hit town I knew that I was in the wrong place and that I should be somewhere else. But I wasn't."

Many times during these early years, Willie thought of dropping out and quitting the music business for good. But for ten years he bided his time. Subsidizing himself with song royalties, he formed his own band, the Record Men, and began touring halls and clubs in Texas. Even though the traveling expenses often outweighed the profits, Willie kept at it. "I guess I was a ham, and I still am," he told Patoski. "I love to get up in front of a bunch of people and sing. I like to be appreciated when it's over. I really enjoy doing it."

There were times during Willie's ten year marriage to his second wife, Shirley, when they enjoyed periods of domestic bliss. At one point, Willie even went so far as to quit the road and the two of them settled down near Nashville on his 100-acre farm to raise hogs. (He also had 45 head of cattle and 390 chickens.) But it was an unsuccessful venture. "Hogs is an art," ex-wife, Shirley told Pete Axthelm (*Newsweek,* August 14, 1978), "but we didn't know that. We just left those feeders full and the hogs ate till they ruptured or died."

"We were buying hogs for twenty-seven cents a pound and selling them for nineteen," added Willie (*Newsweek*). "Songwriting was better than that."

By 1969, his last year in Nashville, Willie was at an all time emotional low. He recalled the circumstances that led up to his decision to move back to Texas: "The night before, Hank Cochran and I had been sitting in the basement writing songs. That year, I went through a divorce. I had four cars wrecked. We were kicking all this around, and we wrote a song, 'What Can You Do To Me Now'. The next day my house burned down."

Lost in the flames were tapes of hundreds of Willie's unrecorded songs. In fact, all he was able to save was his cherished, ancient Martin guitar, and his stash bag. "I had a

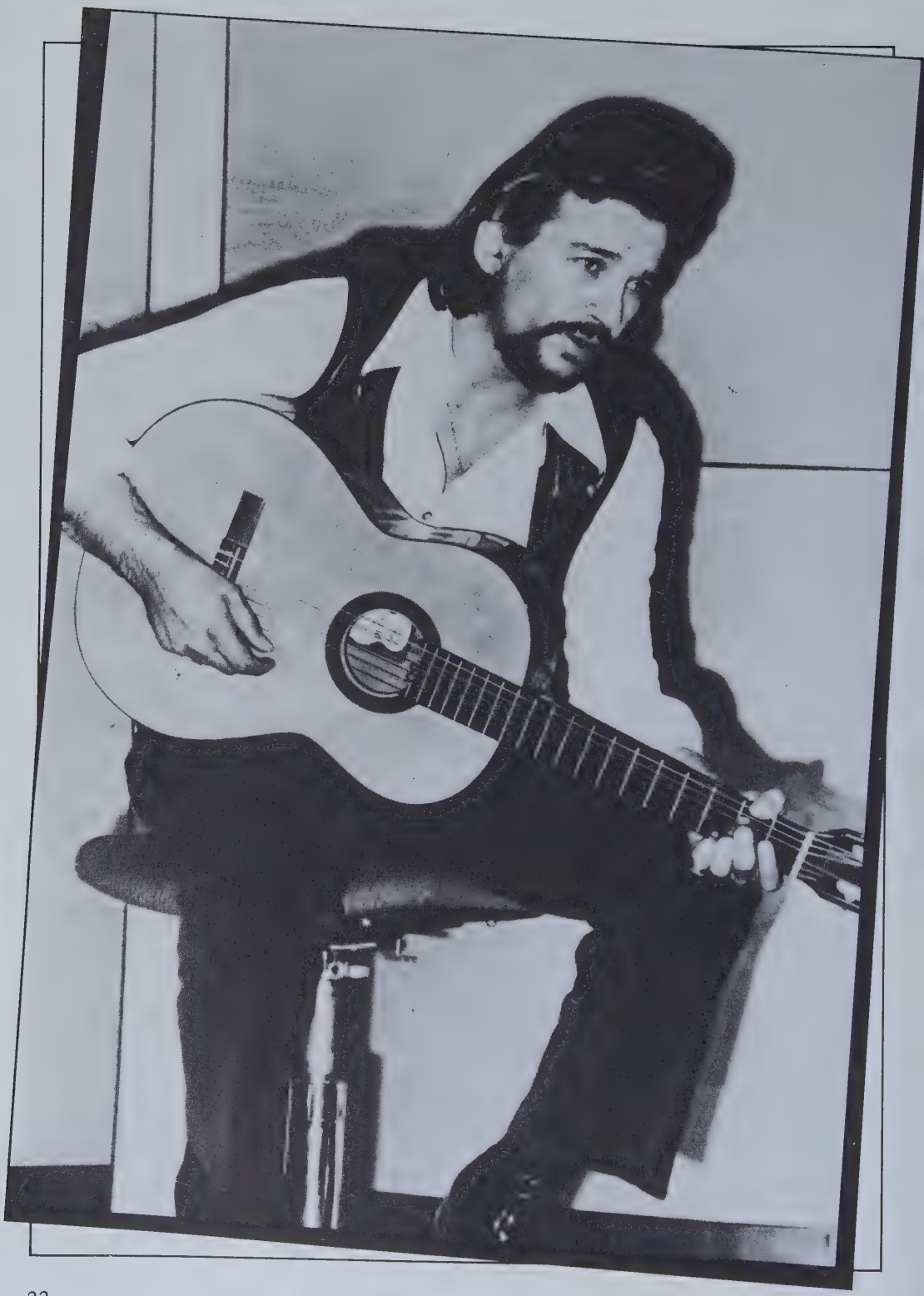
pound of good Columbian in there and I knew I was going to need to get high"(*Rolling Stone*, January 15, 1978).

Within a few days, Willie was back in Texas. He put up his band at a friend's dude ranch near Bandera, Texas, and they started playing the road again. "It wasn't necessarily an overnight move" (*Hustler*). "I was closer to where I was workin' all those

years. Livin' in Nashville, I had to drive so much that I wanted to start livin' where I was workin'. It gave me time to concentrate and get some plan of action together. I knew this was probably my last shot at doin' things as far as sellin' a lot of records as a country singer. I was gettin' up in years. When you hit forty, for a picker, it's gettin' pretty close.

"WHEN YOU HIT FORTY, FOR A PICKER, IT'S GETTING PRETTY CLOSE."

If you haven't made it by then, a lot of people are gonna start sayin' you're over the hill and you're not gonna do it. I already had a lot of success as a songwriter, so I could've laid down, but I guess I was just too stubborn. I wanted to pick and sing, and I wanted to be known as a good picker and a good singer. I wasn't satisfied with just bein' a songwriter."



Waylon Jennings: The Early Years

Chapter 2

WAYLON ARNOLD JENNINGS was born in Littlefield, Texas, "in the suburbs of a cotton patch" on June 15, 1937. Littlefield lies just below the Texas panhandle, not far from New Mexico, and halfway across the state from Willie Nelson's hometown. Waylon was the son of a guitar playing truck driver.

"I pulled a lot of cotton," Waylon told Susan Toepfer, "until I was about sixteen. We had t'do that, y'know, for school clothes and stuff. Sounds like a poor boy story, don't it?. . .Yeh, yeh, we were poor alright. I had the best dad in the world, but he just couldn't ever get goin' when it came to money. . . .My dad played [guitar] a lot like Jimmie Rodgers, and both my parents helped me to play. I grew up on country music—Ernest Tubb, Hank Williams—and started singin' when I was about nine or ten—or *tryin'* to."

By the time Waylon was 12,

he had already landed a job as a disc jockey on a local radio station. "Fifteen minutes. . . seemed like fifteen hours, scared as I was," he told John Grissim (*Country Music: White Man's Blues,* 1970). ". . .I remember one time I was trying to learn two songs before the show. . .and I got so scared that I sang the words of one to the melody of the other."

Like Willie, Waylon was able to find a professional niche in disc jockeying, something he could come back to when his musical career bottomed out.

Waylon left school at fourteen and by sixteen had made his debut as a live performer. If his humorous recollections are accurate, it was little indication of what was to come. "I did a Faron Young song called 'If You Ain't Lovin' Then You Ain't Livin', and I got halfway through it and lost my voice, like to choke to death, on top of a nervous bustdown. That was my first experience onstage, and it almost ended the whole thing," (*Country Song Round-Up,* June, 1976).

When he was in his late teens, he met another young musician who would have a substantial impact on the future course of his life and his early musical development: Buddy Holly. "I got to know Buddy very well, and in fact, knew him six or seven years before I went to work for him," Waylon told John Grissim (*Country Music: White Man's Blues*). "When the family moved to Lubbock [Texas] and while I was a disc jockey there, I became his protégé. Then I went to work for Buddy as one of the Crickets in 1958. He produced the first record I ever had—paid for it and everything. [It was] on the Brunswick label. Buddy flew in King Curtis, the sax player to my first session, and we did one record—"Joel Blon", the Harry Schultz Cajun classic. . .my first record. . .and my first bomb. I hope they don't find it and re-release it."

Waylon played bass for the Crickets for only a few months before Holly died in a plane crash in 1959. He had been on the road with Holly during the tour when the fatal crash occurred. As the story goes, Waylon gave up his seat to The Big Bopper, J.B. Richardson, who was also killed in the crash. "We'd been on the road for days, man," (*The Outlaws: Revolution In Country Music,* 1978). "Our clothes were all dirty and we were all dirty and tired and everything. Even the bus had frozen up one time. It was pretty hectic, so Buddy chartered a plane for him, myself, and Tommy Allsop. . .We were backstage when the Big Bopper asked me if he could take my place on the plane because he had the flu. I told him it was alright, and he made it alright with Buddy.

Waylon found himself badly demoralized by Holly's untimely death. "Everything

seemed just a waste after Buddy died. He [Buddy] was the first man who ever had any faith in me as a singer," Wayon added. "He was a friend all the way. There's never much time that goes by that I don't think of him." Waylon decided to leave the music business. Again, he turned to disc jockeying. He worked briefly at a radio station in Lubbock (where he recorded for Trend, a local label) and then moved to Phoenix, Arizona.

In Phoenix, twenty-two-year-old Waylon resumed his career as a singer and performer. He started working at a small club called Frankie's, then moved on to a steak house called Wild Bill's. He played there for a bout a year, and during that time, he sighed a recording contract with Herb Alpert, who at that time owned A&M Records. Waylon recorded about twelve sides for A&M (among them, his own version of "House Of The Rising Sun," and had several singles released, including "Four Strong Winds," and "Just To Satisfy You." But none of them made an impact.

In Phoenix, some friends of Waylon's opened a club called J.D.'s where Waylon worked for about eighteen months. Over a period of time, he became a local celebrity and began drawing huge crowds. For the first time in his life, he was making *very* good money playing music. While playing at J.D.'s, he met Bobby Bare ("Detroit City") who was one of RCA's hottest young Nashville recording artists. Soon afterwards, Bare recorded an original song of Waylon's, "Just To Satisfy You," and talked about Waylon to Chet Atkins, who was then head of RCA's Nashville operations. "Chet, you gotta sign that ole boy up. He's one of the best I've heard in ages. . . .I know I'm cuttin' my own throat doin' it because he's doing the same thing I'm doing. . .but he deserves to be on a major label. And I gave him [Chet] Waylon's phone number, and he called him up and signed him."

"BUDDY HOLLY WAS THE FIRST MAN WHO EVER HAD ANY FAITH IN ME AS A SINGER."

It was also in Phoenix, in the early 1960's, that Waylon met Willie Nelson. Willie was struggling unsuccessfully to break through as a recording artist and had assembled his own band to tour the Southwest. "We were instant friends," Willie recalled (*Country Style*, September, 1978). "He [Waylon] asked me for some friendly advice on moving to Nashville, giving up a good job with a higher than average income, to dig for some gold on Nashville's 16th Avenue concrete. Naturally, I told him to stay where he was. Fortunately, he didn't listen."

"He told me to stay in Phoenix," Waylon laughed. "I took off for Nashville."

In the same interview, Willie Nelson recalled that Phoenix, during that era, was still a pretty rough-and-tumble place.

One night, he was playing in a local "skull orchard," the kind of place you take your life in your hands when you pay the cover charge, and a man asked him to come outside and sign some autographs. As soon as they were outside, the man began punching him. "We fought out there in the dark for about thirty minutes before anyone came out and broke us up," Willie recalled. "I had blood all over my head."

In 1965, Waylon finally made the big move to Nashville, and he recorded his first sides for RCA Records: "That's The Chance I'll Have To Take," "Stop The World And Let Me Off," and "Anita." His initial success as a recording artist quickly gained him a following throughout the southwest; in fact, in 1965, he was given the "Pioneer Award" as the Top New Country and Western Act of 1965 by the Stockman's Association of the Greater Southwest.

When he first arrived in Nashville, he briefly shared an apartment with Johnny Cash who was already an established recording artist. . .and a half-crazed amphetamine addict. This was the beginning of what Waylon has referred to as "the worst part of my life. . ."

"I met Johnny Cash just a few weeks before I moved to Nashville. Both of us just got rid of one wife and were tryin' to get another, and we lived together for about a year and a half. Johnny was what you call a superstar by then, and one night before I moved, he just called and said, 'I got us an apartment! I got us an apartment!' "

CHET ATKINS (LEFT) AND WAYLON.

Before long, Waylon's fondness for "uppers" had become an addiction. "Yeh, I was really into a self-destruction thing. I *thought* I was havin' a good time, but there was a lot of self-pity there too. That's all depression is, I think—the highest form of self-pity, and you can really get lost in that. People can talk to you, put you down for what you're doin', but until you realize it yourself, you won't change." (Waylon was later to be the model for the character of a twisted, tormented country singer, played by Rip Torn in the 1969 movie, *Payday.*)

By this time, Waylon's first marriage, which had lasted seven years and given him three children had ended. He soon remarried, and his second attempt at matrimony lasted four years. By 1970, he was on his third marriage. "My alimony payments look like the national debt," he told John Grissim (*Country Music: White Man's Blues.*) ". . .I really didn't grow up until I was 'bout twenty-five or twenty-six. . . ."

Though Waylon's personal life was in turmoil during his early days with RCA, his recording career progressed remarkably well. With Chet Atkins producing, his first four RCA LP's made substantial

showings in the country charts. By 1970, he had recorded nearly a dozen albums, all of which had made the top ten. He even had four LP's in the charts at the same time. Unlike Willie, Waylon gained almost immediate acceptance as a singer and recording artist. In the late 1960's, he had his first number one country record, "Only Daddy That'll Walk The Line," a catchy, uptempo number that still gets considerable airplay. Other singles of his, like "The Taker," "Mississippi Women, " "Cedartown, Georgia," and "Good-Hearted Woman," made substantial showings in the country singles charts.

Early Waylon Jennings albums included songs that were daring departures for a Nashville artist of that era. Waylon proved he could hold his own on Lennon-McCartney compositions like "You've Got To Hide Your Love Away," and "Norwegian Wood," as well as other pop standards like "MacArthur Park" and "Bridge Over Troubled Water." His 1968 hit, "Yours Love," even made a dent in the pop charts. RCA gave every indication that they realized they had a talent on their hands who could reach well beyond the standard country audience. Early Jennings albums were marketed with titles like *Folk Country* (1966)

and *Country–Folk Waylon* (1970) and some of them included versions of songs by Gordon Lightfoot and Bob Dylan. Some of the critics outside Nashville were beginning to hear in Waylon's powerful, inflective vocal range, a musical sensibility that was capable of transcending mainstream country music. In 1970, John Grissim, a contributor to *Rolling Stone*, wrote that ". . .from the beginning it is obvious that he is a remarkable artist–not a country boy but a pop singer." In the eyes of the critics and scholars who followed country music during those years, Waylon, along with Kris Kristofferson, Mickey Newbury, Bobby Bare, and Willie Nelson, were being recognized as a new breed of writers and singers. They were artists bringing a forceful new influence to country music that would permanently change its face and eventually move it beyond traditional realms.

During the middle and late 1960's, Nashville's music industry was still a small community of writers, artists, and executives who mingled informally with each other–unlike the artistically segregated industry that it has become today. Waylon and Willie saw each other often, and Waylon, like practically everyone else in Nashville, was aware of all the great songs that Willie had written. ("Willie Nelson's the greatest songwriter who's ever

been, and everybody knows I love Willie," (*Country Style*). "But. . .you go through his catalog, hoss, and ain't nobody wrote that many different types of songs.")

Though in those early days, the two of them were not yet involved in any musical collaborations, they did write a song called "Good Hearted Woman." It eventually became one of their biggest hits. Waylon recalls that Willie was visiting his house in Nashville and the two of them got into a poker game. "I had the verse and chorus of 'Good Hearted Woman' and I was completely stopped and couldn't finish it." (*Associated Press News Service*). "I said to him at the game, 'Willie, if you help me finish this song, I'll give you half of it. I want to record it tomorrow.

"I spent the night at Waylon's house that night," Willie added, "And I woke up the next morning writing the song . . . .I told Waylon about it at the breakfast table, so we finished it after breakfast. We wasn't scheduled to record, but Waylon called the studio and set up some time for that day."

These were the early stages of an acquaintance that would eventually develop into a lifelong friendship and an enduring musical alliance.

The main bread and butter of any successful country recording artist in those days was not record sales; an album

could easily reach the number one spot and still sell only a *fraction* that a number one rock album would. The thing that kept most country entertainers going—and still does—was live appearances. So to make ends meet, Waylon spent the majority of his early Nashville years, hacking out a living on the road, often playing more than 300 nights a year. He played in high school gymnasiums, small clubs, and county fairs. It was grueling and exhausting—and all the months away from home were certain to eliminate the possibility of a stable domestic situation. Waylon saw it—just as he saw writing songs under a pseudonym, another unpleasant task he was forced to turn to out of economic necessity—"as just one of those things you've gotta do to survive."

Miles and miles on the tour circuit induces a degree of craziness in most performers. Waylon was no different. ". . . real squirrelly, we was back then." He recalls shooting guns in the back seats of cars and an incident when his band's involvement in a fight got them a one-way escort out of Canada.

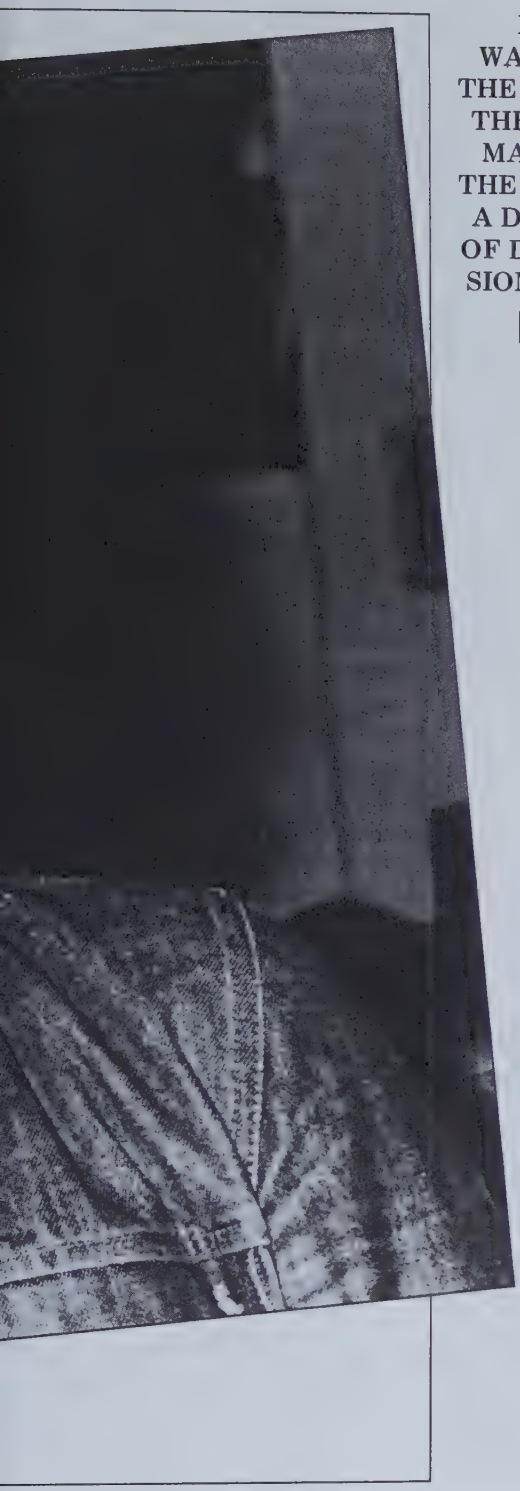
Any ambitious, talented, and strong-willed young artist like Waylon, who hit Nashville in the mid-sixties with a head full of ideas about how his own music should sound, was bound to run into problems. This was the era in which the "Nashville Sound" assembly line approach to recording was in its prime. And Waylon found out, as Willie had just a few years before, that the producer reigned supreme. More often than not, producers chose the songs to be recorded, chose the arrangements, and chose the musicians. Often, an entire LP would be recorded in a day.

IN THE SIXTIES NASHVILLE'S MUSIC INDUSTRY WAS STILL A SMALL COMMUNITY.

[★]

"There used to be a guy with RCA," Waylon told Bob Campbell (*Country Music,* January, 1979), "that would come in and say, 'You just be quiet, and we will take care of this. We know what we are doing about these records'. Now where is that coming from—he knows what he is doing about *my* music? Telling me what to release and then he sits there and pats his foot to the wrong beat. And he whistled with a Yankee accent. Nobody is going to make me change anything about my music. I ain't saying that is the easiest way to go. But I had to do it that way. And I am glad that I did."

Jennings, like Nelson, didn't fit during this era in Nashville where the country music industry had just discovered the tuxedo, and half the town was trying to sound like Perry Como. It was an awkward time for Nashville was going through growing pains and trying to compensate for its down home image by making increasingly slick and urbane music. It's no wonder that stoney-faced Waylon Jennings didn't fit in. For



FOR WAYLON, THE END OF THE 1960's MARKED THE END OF A DECADE OF DISILLUSIONMENT.

Waylon, it was an uphill fight all the way.

"The thing is, they always told me they knew better," he recalled to Robert Hillburn of the *Los Angeles Times* in November, 1978. "They wouldn't let me pick my own songs. They didn't want me to even use my own band. They'd bring in their buddy musicians and listen to their advice on a record, but not mine. I'd cut a basic track on a record and by the time they got through adding stuff to it, I wouldn't even recognize it. They also complained about the way I dressed and that my hair was too long. And it was pretty short in those days."

For Waylon, the end of the 1960's marked the end of a decade of disillusionment. Though his records had sold well for the last four or five years, he had bottomed out and was seriously considering leaving the business. "I couldn't conform," he told Michael Bane (*The Outlaws*, 1978). "I wasn't understood and some of it was maybe my fault—drugs, that stuff. They thought I was out to destroy, when all I wanted to do was survive."

In addition to Waylon's problem with pills, everything else seemed to be going against him. Too many years of spending more than 300 days on the road had taken its toll on his health and emotional wellbeing. "They just wore me down after five or six years of it," Waylon said

(*Country Music News*, 1975). "They [executives and booking agents] had a pretty good thing going for a while. They've all lost control now. . . .But for years, they'd keep guys on one circuit and rip 'em off."

In addition to the fact that he was demoralized and emotionally "all torn up inside," Waylon was also suffering from hepatitis, and was over $500,000 in debt because of mismanagement. "I had gotten to the point where I thought, 'What's the use?' I felt like I was on a merry-go-round and I wanted off. I thought about going back to disc jockeying or maybe learning to play the guitar better so I could do some session work. I didn't really know what to do. I just felt all burned out inside. I was really down and it felt like people were still trying to kick me."

If recognition for Waylon Jennings' unique musical talents was slow in coming in Nashville, he was beginning to be noticed outside of the country music field. By this time, Waylon had his longtime road band, the Waylors, whipped into top shape. They were, as they still are, one of the top road bands in the business, and they offered a perfect backdrop for his powerful vocal talents and his skill on the electric lead guitar. Waylon and his band had begun to receive considerable attention.

In 1969, Waylon recorded part of the soundtrack for Mick Jagger's second feature film, *Ned Kelly*. Released as an LP by United Artists, it features vocals by Waylon, Kris Kristofferson, and Jagger. Waylon never met Jagger, but Mick was so pleased with the soundtrack that he sent Waylon a note of thanks. Later, the two groups, the Rolling Stones and Waylon and his band—at Jagger's request, appeared on the same episode of Don Kirshner's *Rock Concert* in separately filmed segments.

This was a shot in the arm for Waylon and his first indication that there might be a younger audience ready for his music that had not had a chance to hear it. Waylon also won his first Grammy Award in 1969.

But these signs of wider, popular recognition all came at a bad time for Waylon. On top of everything else, he was ending his third marriage. "The first time, I was seventeen, and I thought she was pregnant," Waylon told Robert Windeler (*People*). "We got married at three p.m. and at eight p.m., we found out she wasn't. My second wife was pregnant, my third thought she was, and my fourth wife, Jessi [Colter] is probably the greatest [person] that ever lived."

Jessi Colter was one of the three or four people who eventually helped Waylon turn his life around from the self-destructive course it was on. Two others were his lifelong

REX LUDWIG, BEE SPEERS, RICHIE ALBRIGHT.

friend and drummer, Richie Albright ("Without him, I couldn't have made it," Waylon admits. "He used to have to nearly carry me to the bus.") and Neil Reshen, a notorious, snarling, and deadly efficient New York manager whose former clients included the temperamental jazz trumpeter, Miles Davis.

"I was broke and about $600,000 in debt," Waylon recalled. (*Country Music*, February, 1979), "and it just looked like it was over, y'know. I had hepatitis. That's when Richie came to me and said, 'I know you are fixing to quit, but don't do it. Let's give one more run at it, and if it don't work, we'll go somewhere and get us a sit-down job. I've got someone you need to meet'. That's when he brought in Neil Reshen. Neil is a genius. Me and Willie. . .we were through, you know. We were just up against a brick wall. Neil took us in and fed us and loaned us money, and he didn't know if he was ever gonna get it back. But he had faith in us, and it was hard to find any place to put faith... . That same day that Richie brought Neil to me. . .on the way to the airport, we saw Willie. I told Neil about Willie, and Willie made a deal with him the very same day."

Neil Reshen, who officially

became Willie and Waylon's manager in 1972, has never been known for his subtlety. He is the sort of brash, hostile manager who delights in threatening record companies with audits. He is also a driving force behind the Waylon and Willie phenomenon. He stood and fought for these two when no one else would. With Waylon, Reshen simply started to reorganize his career from the ground up. "Everybody had a piece of him, eighteen different ways," he told Terry Guerin (*Penthouse,* 1972). "There were states he couldn't go into —alimony suits by three ex-wives saw to that. He owed one agent fifty grand. He owed another forty-five to RCA—the label that he had been enriching for seven years. He was playing 300 dates a year, a thousand a pop, and coming off the road further in debt. We turned it around. We upgraded his bookings. . . .We renegotiated his contract with RCA. We settled his alimony suits."

Reshen still manages Waylon today, and has his complete confidence. Reshen and Willie parted ways some time ago after Willie had fired and rehired him several times. (Willie is now managed by Mark Rothbaum, a former employee of Reshen's.) As Willie once said of Neil Reshen (*Country Music,* November, 1975), "He's probably the most hated and most effective manager that I know of. He *enjoys* going to those big corporations and going over their figures. He's so sadistic, he *loves* to do it. . . ."

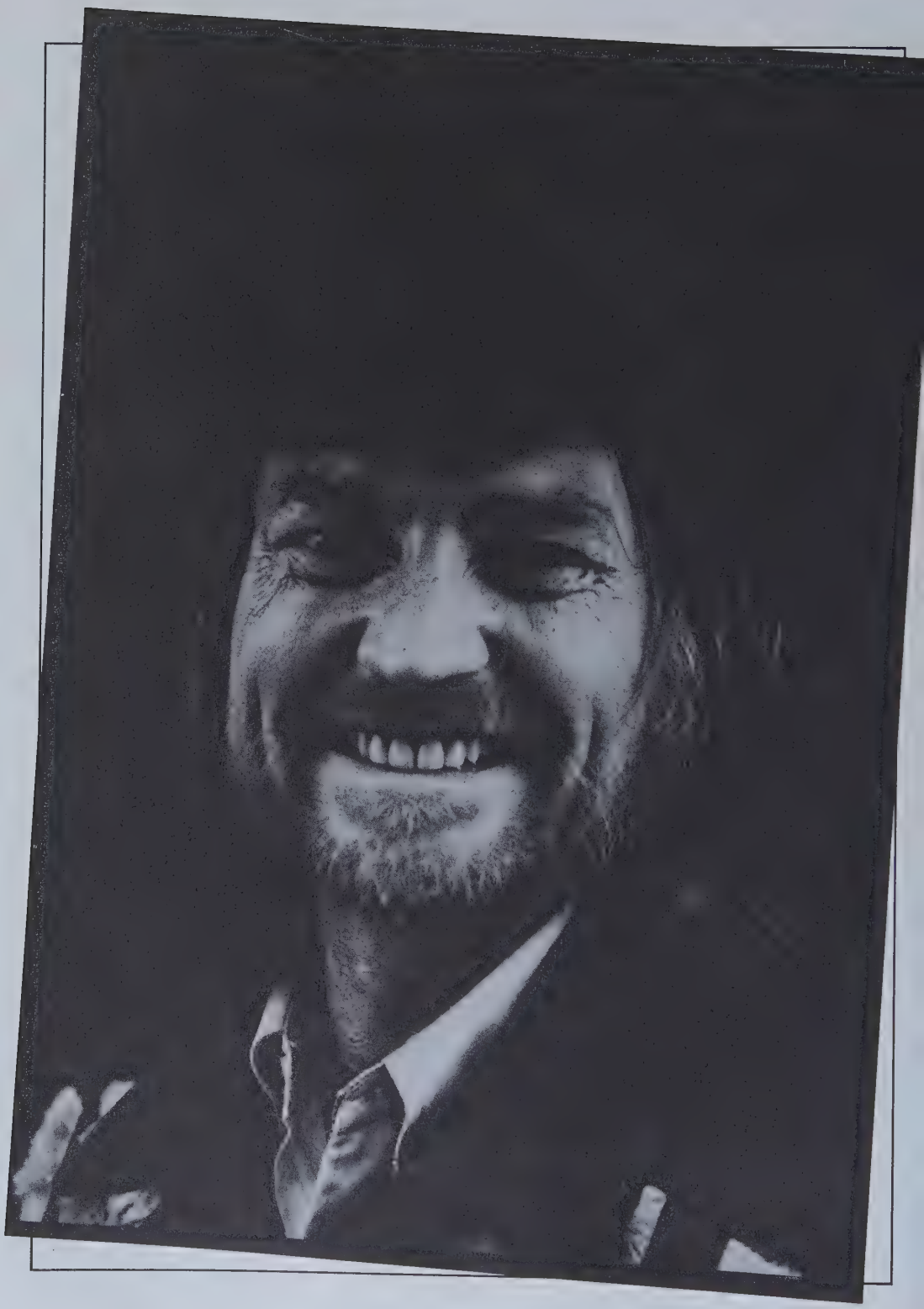
"EVERYBODY HAD A PIECE OF HIM, EIGHTEEN DIFFERENT WAYS."

"It's like having a mad dog on a leash," Waylon once observed.

"If for no other reason, I hired him 'cause *they've* got one," Willie said (*Hustler*). "Whoever you're dealin' with has got a Neil somewhere in the background, guardin' the money. And if you don't have a Neil. . .well then, you're at a disadvantage."

"You want outlaws?" Reshen once rhetorically asked Texas writer, Joe Nick Patoski. "I'll give you all the outlaws you want. . . .I don't care what they label us, I just want Willie and Waylon to be generic names like Elvis, Frankie and Bing."

"That fast-talking New York manager is one of the best people I've ever known," Waylon added (*Country Music*). "And between him and Richie and Jessi, I have somehow managed to stay together."



Willie Nelson: Upward Momentum

Chapter 3

[M]EANWHILE, BACK NEAR Austin, Texas, Willie Hugh Nelson was busy regrouping his forces and his band, and recovering from his traumatic years in Nashville. One of the first things he did was take a long hard look at the Texas music scene to see how he could best fit into it. He had already been playing the state's honky tonk clubs for so many years that "I knew everybody, every club and every waitress on the Texas circuit."

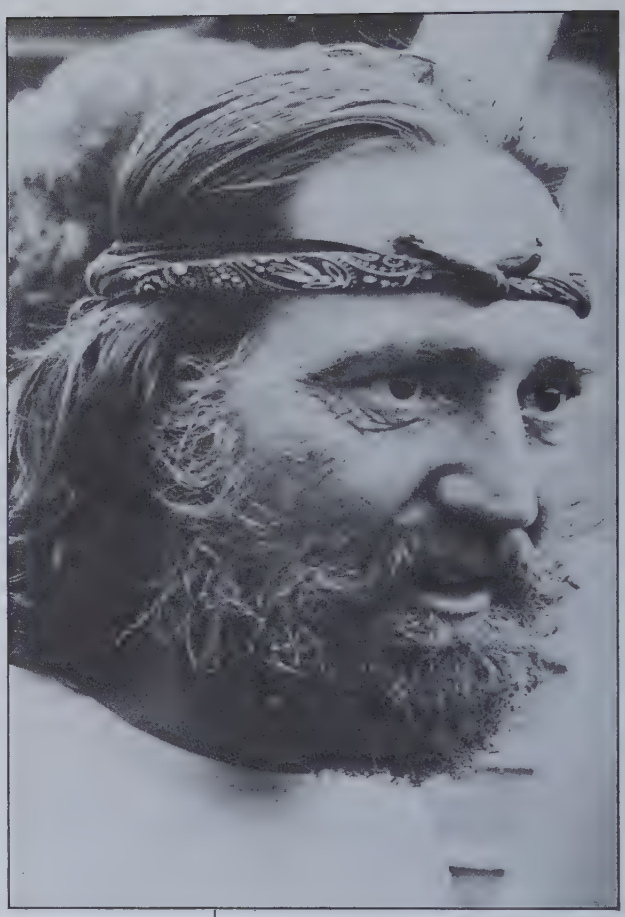
But Willie had a strong sense that something was about to change and he could be a big part of it. "I found a lot of interest in country music among young people," he recalled. "And I also knew that they didn't have any place to go and listen to country music. . . .Their hair was too long to get into some of those places without getting into trouble. . .but I knew there was an audience there. . . .so I went down to the Armadillo World Headquarters [one of

Texas's most famous rock arenas] and told them I wanted to play for their audiences and see if what I was thinking was right."

The audiences at the Armadillo proved to be *more* than ready for Willie's brand of country music. One of the first people that Willie let in on his discovery was his buddy, Waylon Jennings.

"Willie called me and said, 'Hey, hoss, I think I've found something,' " (*The Outlaws: Revolution In Country Music*). "So I got down there and I walked in and saw all those long-haired kids and I thought, 'What's that crazy sonovabitch done to me now?' I said, 'Goddam, Willie!' and he said, 'Just trust me. If they don't go for it, you're going down with me'. But anyway, I saw them, just like an ocean of kids, man, who freaked plum out over our music, and I couldn't believe it. Willie said, 'I think we found something. I think we found people who understand us and who believe in what we're doing; who like us and take us like we are as people and can relate to our music'. I think he was right."

Despite his move to Texas and his general disillusionment with the Nashville studio system, Willie was still contractually obligated to complete one more album for RCA. They called him from Nashville on a Friday and said he had to be back in town on Monday to begin work on the new LP. So



he flew into Nashville, took an "upper" and stayed up all night writing songs. The result was *Yesterday's Wine*, an album that remains one of Willie's best. (It's his own second favorite album of all the dozens he's recorded.) It was the last album he would record in Nashville for years, and it marked a musical awakening for him. *Yesterday's Wine* was probably country music's first "concept" album, and the

songs, like "Summer of Roses," "Goin' Home," and "December Day" were filled with spiritual themes and tales of journeys through life. *Yesterday's Wine* was, unfortunately, so far afield from the usual fare being pumped out of Nashville that nobody quite knew what to make of it. It was unpromoted and unnoticed and gathered dust on the record racks. For Willie, its commercial failure was another deep frustration.

Around this time, Willie was going through some very noticeable changes. Gone was the short haired, suit-and-tie, vacuum cleaner salesman look that he had cultivated during his years in Nashville. He began growing his hair long and he let his beard grow into a thick red bush. His standard dress became flannel shirts, sneakers, and baggy dungarees.

By 1972, Willie had sealed his pact with manager Neil Reshen. He had also married his third, and current wife, Connie. It's no coincidence that around this time, his songs began taking on a decidedly more confident tone. "It was a long time before I ran into any positive relationships between males and females," he told Ed Ward (*Rolling Stone*, January 15, 1976).

Now that his contract with RCA was finally up, Willie was once again free to shop around for a new record label—one that would perhaps be a little more responsive to his special needs as a recording artist. He found immediate interest at Atlantic Records, where vice-president Jerry Wexler was beginning to expand the label's activities into the country field.

CONNIE NELSON AND DAUGHTER, AMY, WATCH THE SHOW.

"I first actually met Willie Nelson in about late 1971," Wexler recalled. (*New York Times Magazine*, March 26, 1978). "But I had known of him for a long time. I went to a party in Nashville after some banquet or other. All these big country stars were there, passing a guitar around, of course, all of them playing a couple of songs. Then Willie got up, ice cold and unknown and took over. In that setting, it was the most remarkable thing I'd ever seen. I walked up to him afterwards and I said, 'Willie, I've been looking forward to meeting you for a long time'. He looked back at me with that great and wonderful smile of his and he said, 'Hey, have I been lookin' for you for a long time.' "

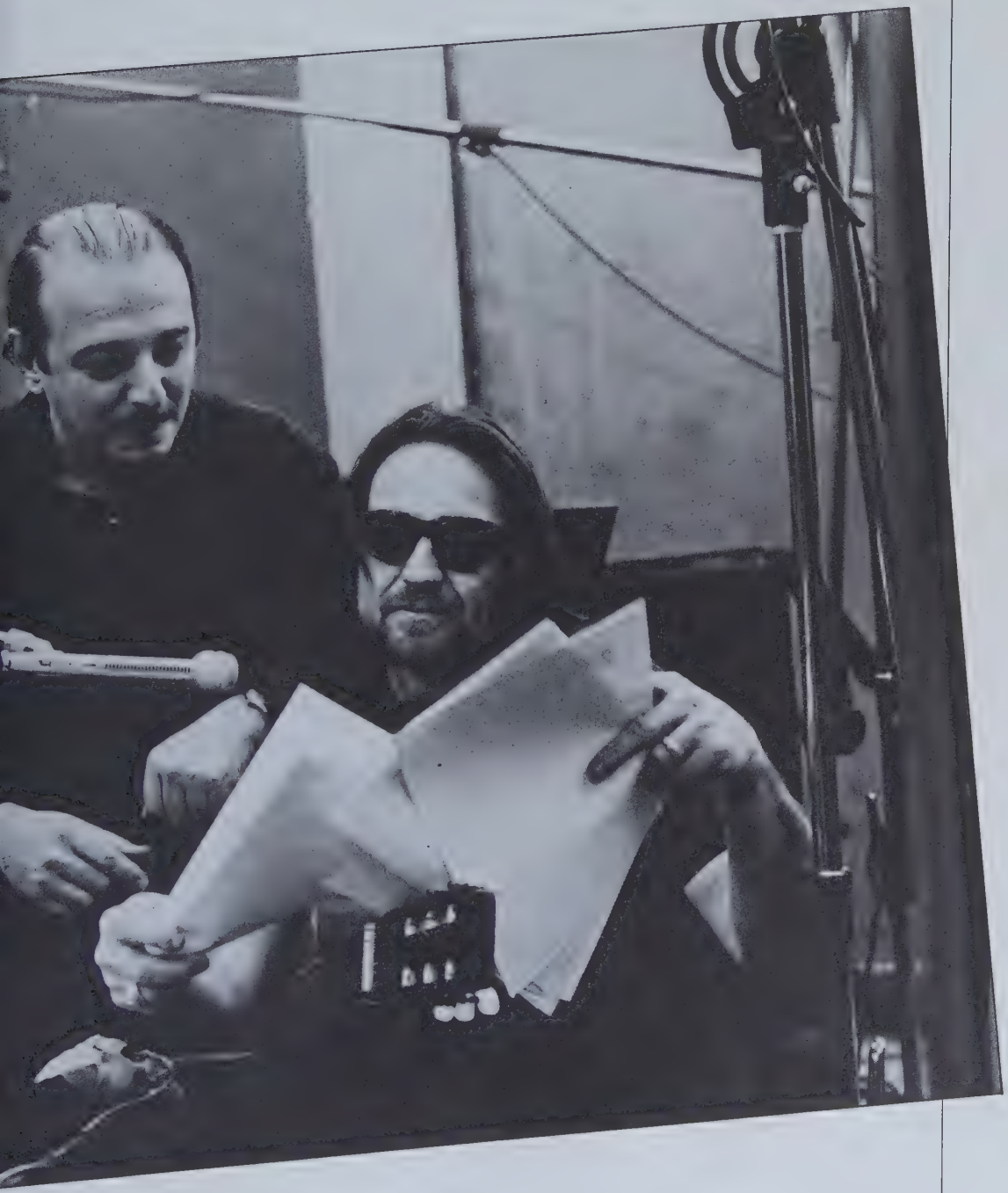
Wexler had great confidence in Willie, and gave him access to Atlantic's New York studio in 1971. When he told him he could bring in any musicians he wanted, Willie's choice was his own road band. Leon Russell dropped by the sessions and stayed to sing harmonies and write a couple of songs. Willie's first Atlantic LP, *Shotgun Willie*, produced by Wexler, was completed in less than two days. The title cut was written on toilet paper between

the high-spirited sessions. This was the first LP that even began to capture the essence of Willie's exciting live sound. *Shotgun Willie* outsold all of Willie's previous Nashville albums combined, within six months of its release and it laid the groundwork for establishing his credentials as a marketable recording artist.

In 1974, Willie followed with another concept album, *Phases And Stages.* It was released just as Atlantic was beginning to dismantle its country division. ("It was just bad timin'," Willie concluded stoically.) None the less, *Phases And Stages* sold 400,000 copies.

Willie's next move was to form his own Texas based record label, Lone Star Records. On the strength of the success of his Atlantic LP's, he worked out a distribution deal with Columbia Records. He then set to work on his next LP, booking time in a small studio in Garland, Texas that was normally used for radio commercials and jingles. In Garland, he and his band recorded *Red Headed Stranger.* Like *Yesterday's Wine*, it was another heavily biographical and romantic concept album. The original storyline for the LP had been sketched out by Willie and his wife Connie during an all-night drive from Colorado to Texas. With Willie producing and arranging (most of the arrangements were built around his battered

WILLIE WITH PRODUCER ARIF MARDIN.



acoustic guitar), *Red Headed Stranger* was completed in a day and a half at a studio cost of less than $20,000. While in the same studio, Willie and his band cut a second album, *The Sound In Your Mind.*

The first reaction among Columbia executives to *Red Headed Stranger* was lukewarm. In Nashville, Waylon Jennings and Neil Reshen played a tape of the album for one CBS executive who informed them that it was a great little demo record, but probably not fit for public release. Waylon was furious, and he and Reshen stormed out.

Despite the lack of executive support, Willie released *Red Headed Stranger* in 1975, and the results were astounding. The album went to the number one spot on the country charts and stayed there for weeks. A single from the album, "Blue Eyes Cryin' In The Rain" (a song that was originally written by the late Fred Rose in 1945), was released at the same time and quickly edged into the number one spot. It was the first time Willie had had a record in the top ten since "Touch Me" in 1962. The *Red Headed Stranger* LP went gold and then platinum. "Blue Eyes Cryin' In The Rain" won Willie his first Grammy Award, in 1975, for Best Country Vocal Performance, Male.

But it was the critics' enthusiasm for *Red Headed Stranger* that was most astounding. Chet Flippo wrote in *Texas Monthly* (April, 1975): "Willie Nelson. . .has recently recorded an album so remarkable that it calls for a redefinition of the term, 'country music'. The difference between Nelson's *Red Headed Stranger* and any other current C&W album. . .is astounding . . .The world that Nelson has created is so seductive that you want to linger there indefinitely."

Shortly afterward, *The Sound In Your Mind,* the other LP recorded in the small Garland studio, was released. *Billboard* voted it Country Album of the Year.

Around this crucial time in his career, Willie got involved in another project that turned out to be one of the wisest moves he'd ever made. On July 4th, 1972, he threw the first annual Willie Nelson Picnic at Dripping Springs, Texas; 50,000 people showed up. Willie assembled a host of musical talent including Waylon, Kris Kristofferson, Leon Russell, and Rita Coolidge.

"The first picnic in Dripping Springs was the biggest risk I've ever taken," Willie said (*Hustler*). "Even though we had the best talent in the world there, there was still the possibility that no one would give a shit, that there would be nobody there but us entertainers in the middle of a hot ranch in Dripping Springs. It could have been that way. It

AT THE FOURTH OF JULY PICNIC.

[★]

was the biggest gamble I've ever taken with my money, my career, my friends, with everything."

But the picnic turned out to be an immense success for Willie; not so much from the gate receipts, but because it put the eyes of the national media on him—not only major music publications like *Rolling Stone,* but *Time* and *Newsweek* as well. To them, the First Annual Willie Nelson Picnic was a social and cultural event of no small import—a kind of Woodstock south of the Brazos.

For the next three years, Willie Nelson picnics were held, and the attendance sometimes soared to 100,000. Unfortunately, with the larger crowds, came severe problems of security, gate crashers, sanitation, and general organization. The 1976 picnic was a disaster. Willie ended up being taken to court by local land owners on charges ranging from curfew violations to allegations that all the noise had caused local farmers' chickens to stop laying eggs. It turned out to be the last Willie Nelson picnic until the summer of 1979. "I

lost about $200,000 [on the 1976 picnic]," Willie told Stacy Harris (*Country Song Round-Up,* June, 1978). "That's the cash money that I had into it. Really! I'm still playing dates working off that last picnic and I still have people suing me."

It was a small price to pay for the dividends that accrued from the series of picnics. Not only had they afforded Willie and the Texas music scene the attention of the national media; they had also turned him into something of a local culture hero in his home state. The Fourth of July in Texas was officially proclaimed Willie Nelson Day" by unanimous proclamation of the Texas legislature. T-shirts appeared with the inscription MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, AND WILLIE. Willie Nelson had finally found the audience he was looking for. "I discovered that there were young people there who liked what I had been singing all my life to people my age and older, (*Look*, April 30, 1979). "We found each other, artist and audience, and started growing together, really."

Waylon Jennings: Upward Momentum

Chapter 4

[J]ESSI COLTER, WHO WAS once married to Duane Eddy, had met Waylon during the sixties. In 1970, Waylon had co-produced, along with Chet Atkins and Danny Davis, Jessi's first RCA album, *Jessi Colter: A Star Is Born.* Waylon can also be heard on various tracks of the LP, singing duet parts and harmonies and doing lead guitar work. Jessi had seen Waylon during some of his worst times and she had heard about him, as well. "Waylon had a reputation for being a wild outlaw," she recalls, "so when he first asked me out, I wouldn't go anywhere with him. I could picture orgies going on in his motel room," she told Michael Bane, "and I just said no way that I was going to go anywhere with him. But he kept after me, and one night he said, 'Would it make any difference if I told you I studied for the ministry once?' It was so funny that I went with him."

After a brief courtship, they

were married. It was his fourth marriage and her second. Waylon had three children from previous marriages; Jessi had a daughter. "I had gotten to the point where I thought it would be impossible for me to be married," said Waylon (*Calendar*, November 19, 1978). "And I guess it still would be except for her. She was perfect for me. She put career and everything aside until I got straightened out. I weighed 136 pounds and was in a mess when I met her. She believed in me when most people were telling her she was crazy to even see me. If it hadn't been for her, I would have flipped out a long time ago, I guess."

"You know, it was really funny," Jessi recalled to Dave Hickey (*Country Music*, December, 1974), "when I married Waylon, I had already been married to Duane Eddy and we had lived in the L.A. music scene, so there wasn't much you could tell me about the tough part of the business. What I couldn't believe about Nashville was that people would try to hold back a man's music because they were afraid any change in the music would cost them their jobs. I still don't understand that. . . ."

For the first time in years, Waylon now had a degree of stability in his domestic life. He and Neil Reshen turned to the task of straightening out some other things. By this time, Nashville was beginning to pay attention to Willie

JESSI COLTER.

Nelson. The success of Willie's *Red Headed Stranger* LP caught Nashville completely off guard. They had never really known what to do with him as a recording artist. Willie's success gave Waylon the inspiration to accomplish some of his own goals which he now realized were in reach. First of all, he and Reshen went over the heads of RCA's Nashville executives and went to New York. One of the honchos there had a huge portrait of ex-RCA artist Willie Nelson on the wall behind his desk. Waylon pointed to it and told him, "You blew it with him, hoss. Now just don't blow it with me."

Waylon left New York with a promise that more promotional effort would be made on his RCA releases in the future. This had been prompted by an earlier incident, when one of the heads of RCA, in Nashville, had said publicly that should Waylon Jennings sell as many records as Charlie Pride, country music's only major black artist, then RCA would promote Waylon's records with the same degree of enthusiasm. Waylon and Reshen asked for an accounting, and found out he was selling *more* records than Charlie Pride.

"I was pretty well wiped out on drugs and things too, you know," Waylon explained (*Outlaws*). "But I have never been to where I couldn't take care of myself—a lot of people,

that's where they misjudged me. They thought I was really gone, and they could take advantage."

Reshen and Waylon then began to negotiate with RCA, and slowly began to get the creative control in the studio for which Waylon had fought for so long. "I asked for artistic control and freedom. And that was one of the things that everybody was dead set against giving me. But I wouldn't go without it," Waylon told Bob Campbell (*Country Music*). "And yet, you know, when I came into the studio, it was pressure. Because if I could get that kind of control, then everybody is watching. The first thing we worked on was on the *Lonesome On'ry and Mean* album (1972). But the first entire album I had control over was *Honky Tonk Heroes* (1973)."

On his LP's from this period, Waylon sought the best approach, and worked with a number of producers, often producing or co-producing a number of tracks himself. The tracks on his *Lonesome On'ry And Mean* LP were done under the supervision of three separate producers: Danny Davis, Ronny Light, and Waylon himself. *Honky Tonk Heroes* features one cut produced by Waylon. Most of the others he co-produced working with Ronnie Light, Ken Mansfield, and Tompall Glaser on various tracks. He co-produced his 1974 LP, *This Time,* with Willie Nelson. It is a remarkable album, and it is the first indication of how effectively the two could work together. It contains four songs written by Nelson, "Pick Up The Tempo," "Walkin'," "It's Not Supposed To Be That Way," and "Heaven Or Hell." Willie can be heard, playing lead guitar, and singing harmony as well. The arrangements are low-key and simple, but there are occasional flourishes of experimentation. The LP holds up well, and is one of Waylon's best from that period. *The Ramblin' Man,* released in 1974, is the first RCA LP on which Waylon is listed as full producer. The same year Waylon recorded several of his live performances at "The Western Place" in Dallas, Texas, and at the Austin, (Texas) Opry House. He and Ray Pennington co-produced the excellent LP, *Waylon Live,* which wasn't released until 1976.

NEIL RESHEN.

Gradually, as he began getting more and more input into his studio work, Waylon began using members of the Waylors like drummer Richie Albright, and steel guitarist Ralph Mooney. This was something that his earlier producers had been decidedly unenthusiastic about letting him do; yet it gave his music a raw, vital edge (showcased to perfection on the excellent 1976 *Waylon Live* LP) that it never had before.

A powerful force behind

his company is the perennial favorite by John Hartford, "Gentle On My Mind.")

"Now a lot of people are gonna think this is kind of funny," Waylon told *Nashville Sounds* in 1975, "because they thought when Tompall Glaser and I got together, we'd kill each other. You know we're both. . .uh. . .country boys. . .and have been known to. . .uh. . .get a little rowdy from time to time. Tompall is my best friend and has had a lot to do with me getting it all together. He's taught me so much in the business field."

Though the two of them later went their separate ways in a flurry of lawsuits and ac-

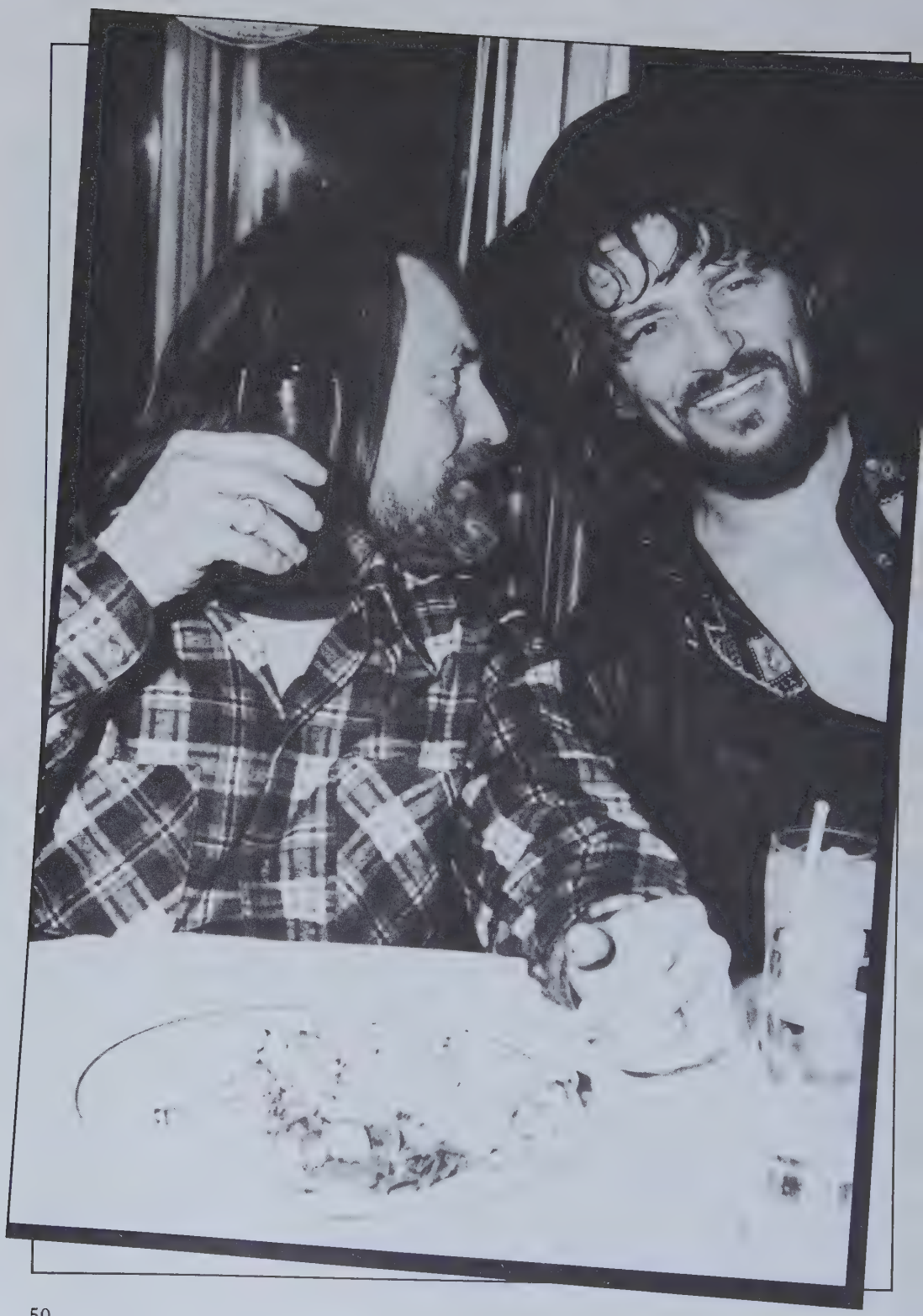
the resurgence of Waylon's career was Tompall Glaser, one of Nashville's most colorful resident artist/producer/writer/publishers. Tompall had come to Nashville with his two brothers, and they recorded successfully as the Glaser Brothers, eventually winning several Country Music Association Awards as Best Vocal Group. Later, Tompall did well on his own as a recording artist, recording numerous hit records with MGM Records, and later with ABC. Along with his brothers, he started Glaser Productions, a thriving enterprise which included a studio and a publishing company. (One of the many titles that Tompall has registered in

cusations (in the wake of the eminently successful *Outlaws* LP, on which they both appear), they were, for a long time, close friends. Besides recording and experimenting in Tompall's studio, free from the time clock pressures of the RCA studios, the two of them became renowned for their round-the-clock marathon pinball sessions, and their occasional habit of kicking down doors. "The point I wanted to prove was that a unit of people working together, banding together can show strength," Tompall told Michael Bane in 1978. "Waylon and I together had twice the strength that we had as individuals, maybe twenty times. People who wouldn't listen to him before suddenly listened to him. He could back it up legally. He had an ally."

Waylon began producing sessions with his wife Jessi, whose background was also as a recording artist and songwriter. In 1975, they released "I'm Not Lisa," a beautiful, evocative love song that went to the top of the country charts and established Jessi as a recording artist in her own right.

WAYLON'S BAND.

By 1975, Waylon's concentrated efforts in the studio had begun to pay off. In that year's Country Music Association Awards, he was nominated in four categories, and Jessi won three nominations. The two of them attended the nationally televised awards show, and Waylon appeared on stage to pick up his award for Male Vocalist of the Year. Though Waylon begrudgingly accepted the award, he had thought of boycotting the gala event (something that he has done every year since). "I knew two minutes after I walked in the back door of the Grand Ole Opry House, just what I had won and how the balloting had gone. Someone not even connected with the CMA had told me." "These awards are supposed to be under top secrecy, but it sure didn't seem like it to me. It angered me. . .This was Jessi's first year to be nominated for the awards. I went to the show because I wanted to be with her. I would have refused the award I was given had it not been for her. . .All I knew was that I don't agree with everything the awards stand for. . ."



Waylon & Willie: The Outlaws

Chapter 5

[A]S WILLIE NELSON'S CAreer gathered momentum and he began getting a national audience, Waylon Jennings and his producer/cohort Tompall Glaser noticed. Waylon was well on the way to success but so far he had experienced nothing approaching the magnitude of Willie's accomplishments.

Nashville recording executives were quick to realize that Willie had indeed, tapped into something big with this new, younger audience he had discovered. RCA vice-president Jerry Bradley was the first to hit upon a concept for an LP that might allow Waylon to penetrate this new market. Why not put together an album that would combine the talents of these "outlaws"—as they had come to be known for their casual lifestyles and their insistence on working outside the traditional political system of the country music industry.

"Waylon was booking out

as the Outlaws, he and Tompall and Jessi and Willie occasionally," Bradely recalled to Martha Hume, "and Willie had just had a hit ["Blue Eyes Cryin' In The Rain"], and Jessi had just had a hit ["I'm Not Lisa"], and Waylon had been having all kinds of hits, and none really as big as Willie or Jessi. So I told Waylon I thought we ought to do this *Outlaws* package and make his picture a little bigger and boost his image a little bit. He said, 'Well, I wish you'd use Tompall'. I said, 'Fine, if we can work things out with MGM [Tompall Glaser's record label at the time], I'll be glad to use Tompall.' "

Eight of the eleven tracks on the 1976 *Wanted: The Outlaws* LP were previously released material. Included on the album were two songs by Waylon, two by Willie, two by Tompall Glaser, two by Jessi, one duet with Waylon and Jessi (a moving version of "Suspicious Minds"), and two duets with Willie and Waylon. The best cut on the LP is a rousing live version of "Good Hearted Woman" (which Waylon and Willie co-authored some years earlier). The song was actually recorded live by Waylon some years before, and Willie had later slipped into a Nashville studio to overdub his own voice.

Most outstanding with the *Outlaws* LP—perhaps even a bit more than the music—is its ingenious packaging. The front cover is designed like an old wild west, "Wanted Dead Or Alive" poster, and painted in sepia. When "Good Hearted Woman" was released as the LP's first single, it shot to the number one spot, and stayed there for weeks. It sold phenomenally well; within a few months it had passed the million sales mark, became the first platinum country album, and the biggest selling album in Nashville's history.

AFTER THE *OUTLAWS* LP, THINGS WERE NEVER QUITE THE SAME FOR WAYLON AND WILLIE.

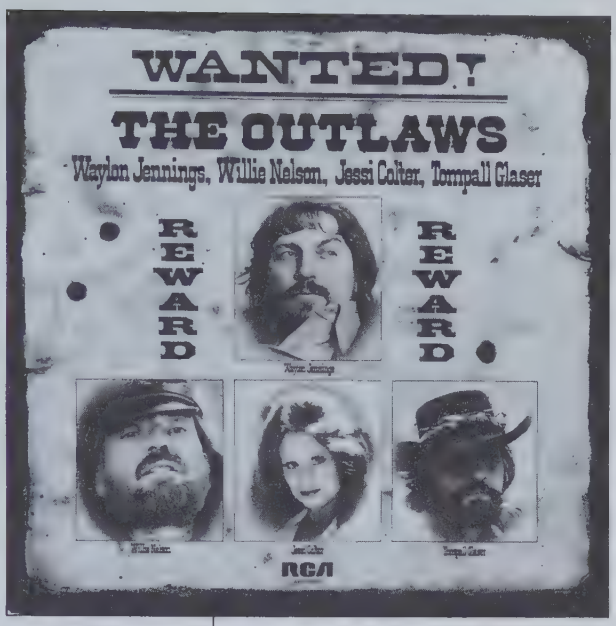
On the strength of the *Outlaws* LP, Waylon and Willie swept the 1976 Country Music Assocation Awards, winning Best Single ("Good Hearted Woman"), Best Album, and Best Vocal Duo ("Good Hearted Woman"). Waylon did not appear to pick up the awards, but Willie showed up at the normally stodgy, tuxedoed affair, all smiles, and bounded on to the stage to accept their trophies in his customary sneakers, head band, and flannel shirt.

After the *Outlaws* LP, things were never quite the same for Waylon and Willie. They became—as one writer put it—the Redford and Newman of country music. Everyone wanted to know what they ate for breakfast, who they slept with, and their opinions on national politics. Their triumphant success with the *Outlaws* marked their final triumph over the Nashville star-system that had ignored them for so long. "Those guys [the record executives] didn't know that audi-

ence was there," (*Rolling Stone*). "That's what happens when you sit behind a desk a lot. You don't get out there and see what people are paying money to see. I been playing beer joints all my life. I know what those people like to hear."

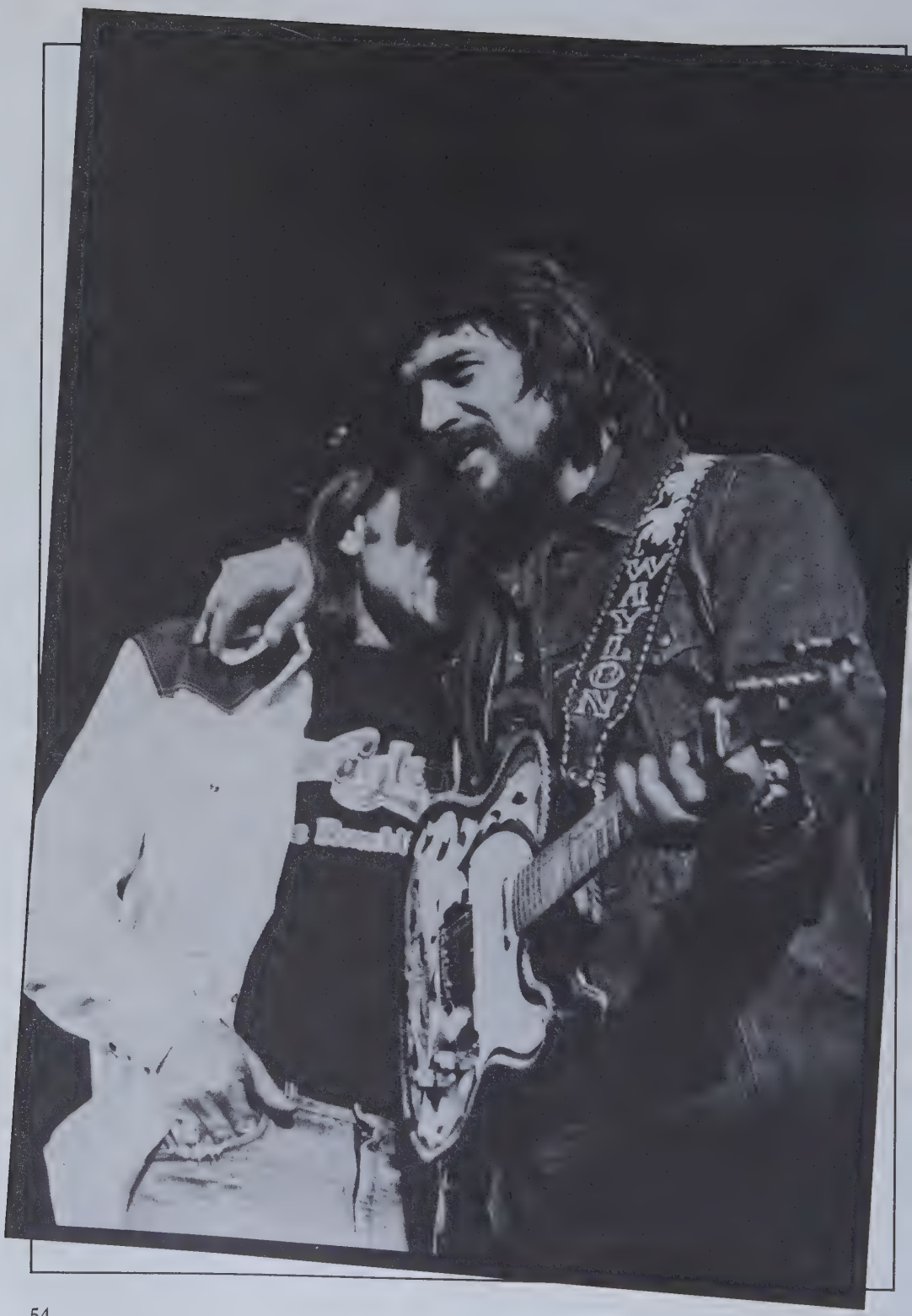
"I think people in Nashville know *less* about what country is than anybody," Jennings told John Rockwell of the *New York Times.* "They limit themselves. . . .If we fought for anything, it was the right to be ourselves and not to be typecast."

But fame always has its price. The *Outlaws* album stuck the two of them with a tag that wouldn't go away, even after they had long outgrown the need for it. As Waylon later sang in his single release in 1978, *"Don't you think this outlaw bit's done got out of hand/what started out to be a joke, I don't understand."* "The 'outlaw' thing to me, is a big joke," Willie told Stacy Harris (*Country Song Round-Up,* September, 1978). "I'm just *not* an outlaw. There may be one or two things I do illegally. I speed occasionally. I go past fifty-five miles an hour, but not intentionally. I mean, I don't go around breaking laws all the time. I pay my taxes. I pay my rent. . . .So how they figure I'm an outlaw, I don't know.



It must look good in print. It may sell some magazines. I don't really care. If they want to call me that, I'll go along with it."

The enduring "outlaw" tag leaves Waylon more exasperated. Like Willie, he'd like people to know him for his music, and not for some promotional gimmick that merely helped get them over the hump back in 1976. "I don't really like the term 'outlaws'. I always thought it was corny. All the word means is something that lives outside a working system. I like to sing. Titles are made to merchandise and distribute."


WAYLON

Waylon & Willie: Post-Outlaw Careers

Chapter 6

[T]HE "OUTLAW" ALLIANCE had shown that Waylon and Willie, when they combined forces, could do some incredible things like turn the entire country music industry on its ear. The fabulous success of the *Outlaws* LP gave the final boost to their respective solo careers, caused a resurgence in sales of their previous solo LP's and in the eyes of the record buying public and the music industry, made the two of them inseparable.

By this time, Willie Nelson's thirteen-year exile from the radio airwaves—which had been broken with his number one single, "Blue Eyes Cryin' In The Rain" in 1975—had long since ended. In 1977, the year following *Outlaws*, he had three number one albums, and he was working harder than ever. In fact, in Fort Worth, Texas, he collapsed

from exhaustion onstage while giving a concert.

1977 turned out to be a remarkable year for Waylon as well. Trade magazine polls placed three of his albums in the year's top ten. In sales, this put him ahead of every other country artist, including Dolly Parton. Three of his albums, *Dreamin' My Dreams, Are You Ready For The Country,* and *Waylon, Live* were all certified gold. Similarly, his single "Luckenbach, Texas (Back To The Basics Of Life)" (on which Willie can be heard singing on the last verse), hit the country record charts at the highest position ever recorded during the first week of release, and then stayed in the number one spot for six weeks. Waylon now had nearly fifty people on his payroll, and was able to demand—and receive—$15,000 a night for personal appearances—a far cry from the $1,000 for one nighters he had been doing just a couple of years earlier. Waylon was also named Number One Country Artist of the Year by *Rolling Stone.*

The *Outlaws* LP had certainly served its purpose. But fame and popularity were taking their toll on Waylon. The road was still a grind, and by early 1977, he was, by his own admission, famous, but *very* tired. When asked by *Country Style* what his future plans were, he replied, "If it's anything like the remainder of this month, [the rest of the year], I'm probably going to be in the hospital. We're getting more dates than we can handle. I'm workin' too hard and too much, and it's showin' in my music and my attitude."

FAME AND POPULARITY WERE TAKING THEIR TOLL.

Around this time, Waylon, like Willie, started getting offers to appear in movies, including an offer from his friend Kris Kristofferson, to appear with him in Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett and Billy The Kid.* But he turned them all down with the same sort of cautionary circumspection which had guided him with his music. "The only thing I'd be interested in, movie wise, would be some heavy, big actor starring and I'd play the second part, because I'm a singer and I'm not tryin' to start another career."

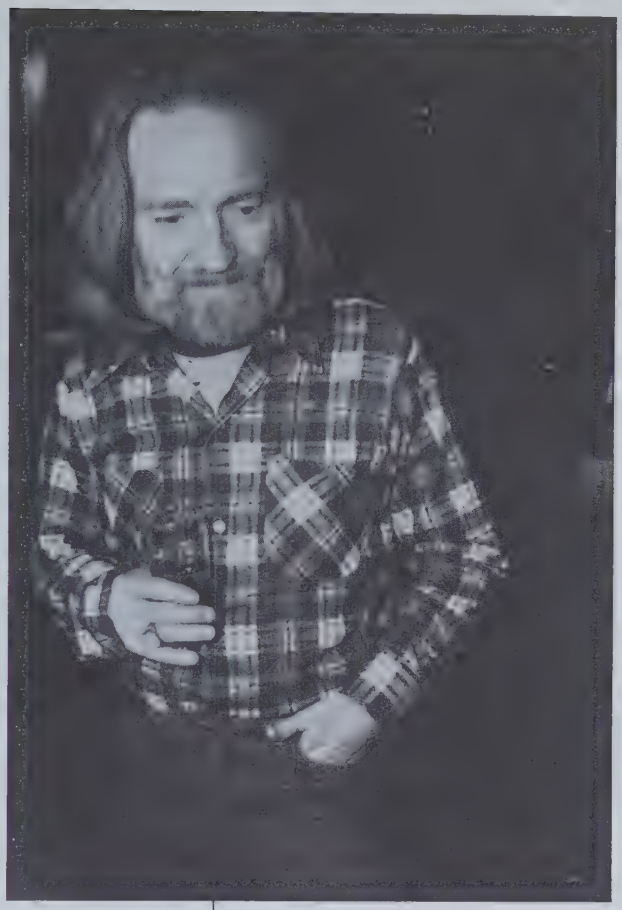
For similar reasons, Waylon, remained independent of everyone, including his fans. He fought attempts to start a Waylon Jennings fan club. "I never wanted one, and when there was one, I dissolved it. . . .When I was strugglin' where were they at then? I definitely believe that all an entertainer owes his fans is a good performance."

In 1977, he and Willie were again nominated for Country Music Association Awards. Waylon's nominations included Album of the Year (*Ole Waylon*), Single of the Year ("Luckenbah, Texas"), Male Vocalist of the Year, and Vocal Duo of the Year (with Willie on "Luckenbah, Tex-

as"). Only this time, the two of them tried unsuccessfully to have their names removed from the ballots. The CMA was notified of the decision in a letter from their attorney, Elliot Hoffman. In part, the letter stated, "The relationship between Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings is a warm and close one. Plainly and simply, they would prefer not to enter the competition."

When *Tennessean* (Nashville's morning paper) reporter, Laura Eipper tried to reach Jennings for comment, his public relations manager referred her to a statement Waylon had made in the September, 1975 issue of *Picking Up The Tempo*: "The awards I'm looking for are acceptance of the people. As far as the awards are concerned, if you worry about the awards, this affects your music and that makes you right into a stereotyped music man. I'm not into that at all."

In Early 1977, Waylon was drawing close to contract time with RCA, and a minor rift opened up there. When he showed up for a concert in Minneapolis with his hair cut short and his beard shaved off, he told the audience jokingly, "The reason I got a haircut was I got to meet with RCA tomorrow and I want to look like John Denver and David Bowie. They've been giving them all the money."



Around the same time, Waylon was named an honorary police chief by the Nashville Metropolitan Police Department. The irony of this, of course, was not apparent until a few months later on August 24, 1977, when Waylon was busted and charged with conspiracy and possession of cocaine. (The charges against him were later dismissed.) It had all begun when Waylon and his band were in the American Recording Studio in

Nashville, next to Jenning's offices, where Jennings and Richie Albright were producing an album with Hank Williams, Jr. A secretary arrived with a package she had picked up at the Nashville airport, and she was followed by Federal Drug Enforcement Agents. The package she carried had been intercepted earlier, en route from New York, it contained twenty-three grams of cocaine. The agent's search of the recording studio failed to turn up anything. Waylon was quickly released on bond, and within twelve hours of his arrest, he showed up at a concert that Willie was giving at Nashville's Municipal Auditorium. When he strolled onstage, he got a standing ovation. "I didn't do it!" he laughed, in obvious reference to the earlier events.

The cocaine bust was Waylon's first arrest, and it sent

up a storm of protest from those around him. "This is definitely a set up," one of his ex-employees told the *Tennessean.* All we have to do is find out who did it. Waylon's been doing real good lately. He's been keeping real straight."

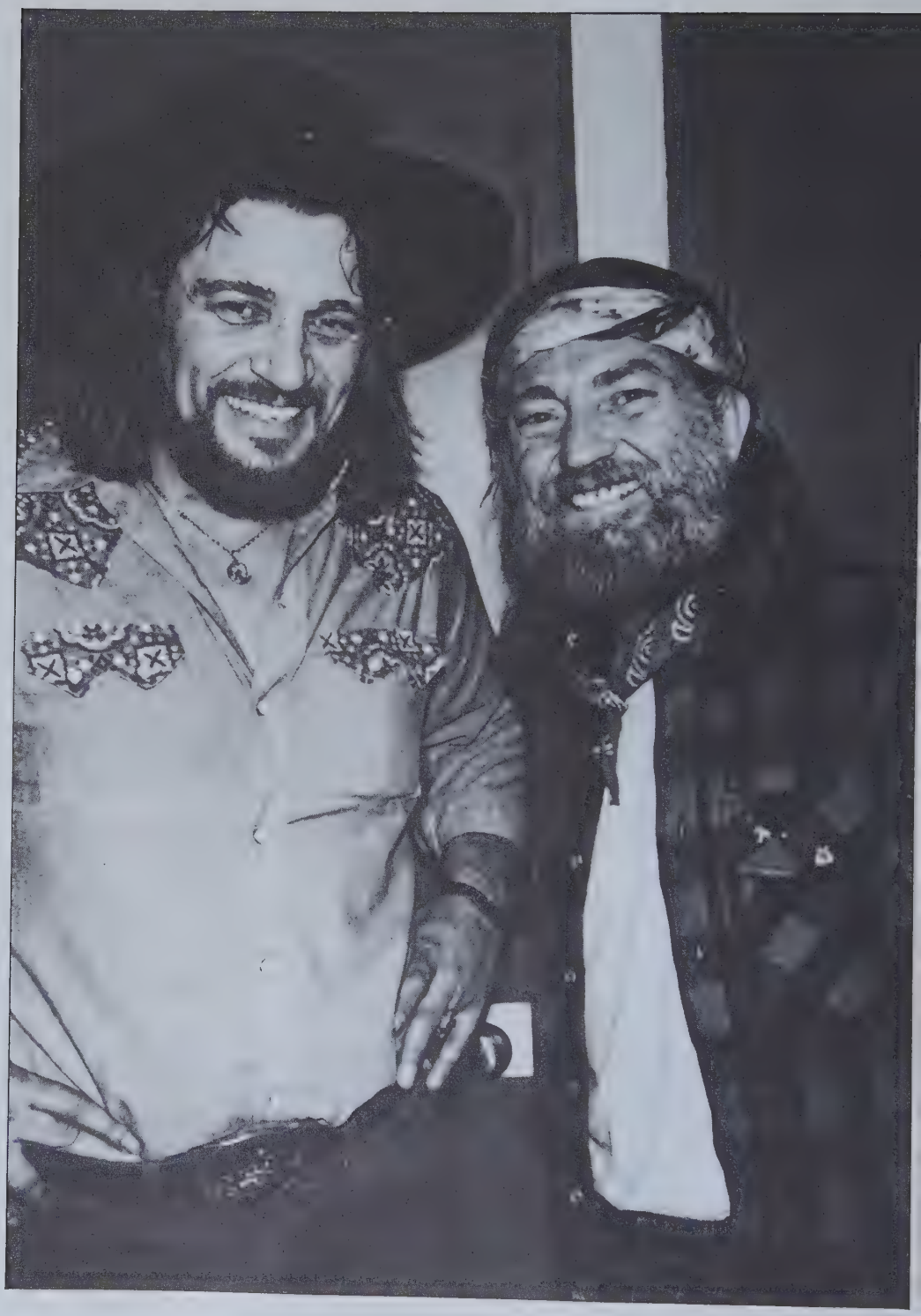
The controversy over the cocaine bust took a while to cool down. It was complicated when Richie Albright struck, and badly cut, a local TV cameraman who was following him and Waylon from their attorney's office.

WAYLON'S DRUG ARREST TURNED OUT TO BE A SMALL SETBACK IN A CAREER THAT WAS OTHERWISE GAINING MOMENTUM.

(Later, in September of 1978, Waylon had another brush with the law. This time, he found himself in the same boat with thousands of middle-aged fathers across the country: His nineteen-year-old daughter was arrested on a minor marijuana charge.)

Waylon's drug arrest turned out to be a small setback in a career that was otherwise continuing to gain momentum at a furious pace. By the time the storm had subsided, his *Ol' Waylon* LP had been certified platinum and ranked as one of the top selling records of the year.

In January, 1978, obviously influenced by the success of *The Outlaws*, RCA released another duet album entitled simply, *Waylon and Willie.* The album broke record chart history when it debuted at number one on the charts. Again, the album's packaging was as ingenious as the music that it contained. The cover was made of thick, glossy, dark brown paper, with a raised design that had the look of tooled leather. Small portraits of the two were superimposed over a line drawing of a cowboy riding across a high plains drifter sort of overlook of a prairie ghost town. The final touch was rave liner notes written by Chet Flippo, the influential music journalist. The album contains five duets and



six solos (three each), including Waylon's compelling version of Fleetwood Mac's "Gold Dust Woman." "Waylon picked most of the songs," said Willie. "I liked his choice. He played those two songs by Kris Kristofferson ('Don't Cuss The Fiddle' and 'The Year 2003 Minus 25'), and I said, 'I think they're great. Let's do them."

"I was just playing them for you," Waylon laughed in reply. "I hadn't picked them to record. I was surprised when you picked 'The Year 2003 Minus 25'."

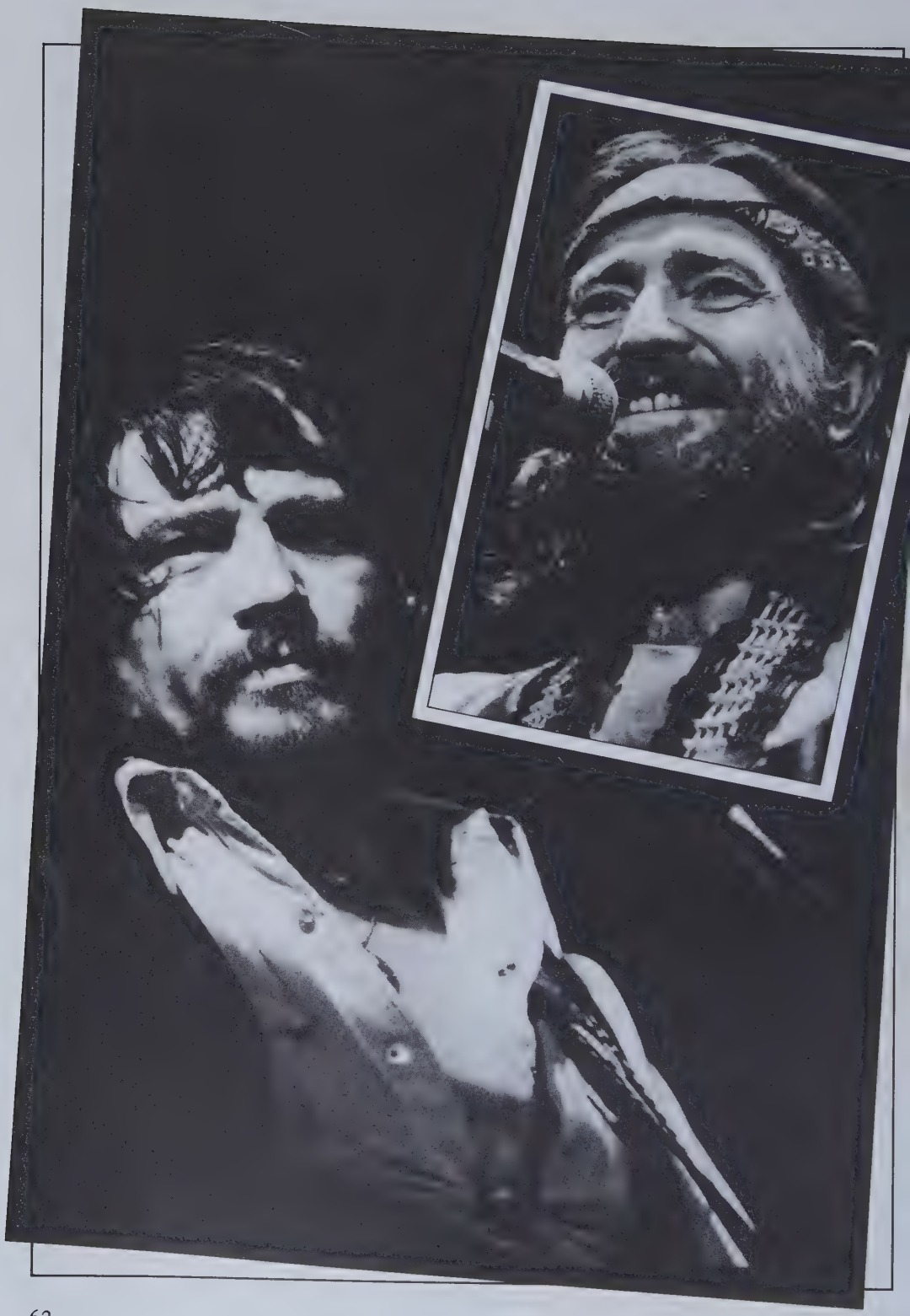
Though the album received mixed responses, it went platinum in a very short time. Even though "Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys" had already been a number one single for its writer, country artist, Ed Bruce, Waylon and Willie also released it as a single, and their version reached the top of the charts. In 1979 it won the two of them a Grammy Award for Best Country Vocal Performance by a Group or Duo.

In the first week of March, the two of them hit the road again, and this time, they outgrossed every other musical act touring anywhere in the U.S. except ShaNaNa. Most of those who turned out to see them were younger listeners who, a few years earlier, wouldn't have known Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings from a wrestling team from Australia. In 1976, Waylon remarked to Bill Klasne (*Country Style*), "What guys like Willie and myself are doin' is bringing together people nobody or nothing else—not even politics or religion—has ever been able to pull together. . . .

THEY OUTGROSSED EVERY OTHER MUSICAL ACT TOURING ANYWHERE IN THE U.S. EXCEPT SHA-NA-NA

"I think the kids are lookin' for something real to turn to," he added. "Willie and I have been called crazy and wild and everything, but I guess the kids know we do stand up for what we believe in.

"It's a helluva great compliment, havin' those young people behind us. . .because, man, they're hard to fool. . . .I tell you, that's one reason I think this country's in real great shape. . . .These kids nowadays, they're worried about it. They're concerned about America. Therefore, I think we all got a pretty good future."



WAYLON & WILLIE AT THE TOP

CHAPTER 7

THOUGH WAYLON AND WILlie have remained steadfast friends throughout their careers, it's hard to think of two artists whose personalities are so divergent, or whose methods of coping with fame and success are so different.

Willie has accepted his celebrity status with total ease. He easily negotiates the pressures of his heavy work schedule and the demand of being in the public eye. He's everywhere: in Nevada filming *Electric Horseman* with Robert Redford; in Washington D.C. appearing at the White House with Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter; backstage at the Austin (Texas) Opry House (which he recently purchased for a reported $250,000); or jogging five miles in New York's Central Park.

And with all of these projects, Willie handles himself with such total ease that he leaves you feeling he was never meant to be any place else, doing anything but exactly what he is doing right now. Yet he expresses surprise about the whole thing. "I never expected it to get this big," he

admitted to Michael Bane (*Look*, April 30, 1979). "I knew I'd be successful, but I never expected this. . . .To be perfectly honest, I don't feel any different. I'm still out there hustling every day."

Indeed, Willie does keep right on "hustling"; he maintains a touring schedule of 200-250 appearances a year—although he now plays in massive auditoriums and Las Vegas hotels, rather than high school gyms and dingy bars. (In the summer of 1978, he and the Grateful Dead played for an audience of 62,000 at a concert in the Giant's Stadium in the Meadowlands, in New Jersey.

WILLIE AND DARRELL ROYAL CHAT WITH JOHN BELUSHI DURING REHEARSAL OF "SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE."

[★]

Between personal appearances, Willie has been involved in numerous other projects as well. He's appeared several times on *Saturday Night Live.* His picture has graced the cover of many national magazines in the past two years, including *Rolling Stone* and *Newsweek,* and in general, the national media has treated him as something of a cultural phenomenon. Still, he finds time to grant interviews to even the smallest, most obscure magazines that request them. He's proven to be a natural p.r. person and maintains a relationship with the press that is both cordial and cooperative.

In addition to the recently completed *Electric Horseman,* Willie has also committed himself to two more major film projects. Plans for a film called *Honey-Suckle Rose,* starring Willie, are on the front burner. Plans for a documentary about Willie's life and career entitled *Sad Songs and Waltzes* are also underway by another company. And Universal Studios has adapted Willie's *Red Headed Stranger* LP into a major film. Robert Redford has read the script and has expressed interest in playing the lead.

WILLIE AND CHARLEY PRIDE PRESENTING THE FIRST SPECIAL AWARD OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION TO PRESIDENT CARTER.

By the beginning of 1979, Willie had put together a financial empire. In addition to his purchase of the Austin Opry House, he has invested two million dollars in a new apartment and convention center complex in Austin, Texas. His seventh—annual Willie Nelson Fourth of July picnic was held at the 75-acre Pedernales golf course and Country Club near Dallas, which he recently purchased for a reputed $250,000 He has also expanded his Texas-based Lone Star record label, and currently has signed more than half-a-dozen prom-

ising Texas artists. (Lone Star was, for a time, distributed by Phonogram/Mercury, but that arrangement was recently terminated. Currently, Willie is debating whether to shop around for another major label distributor, or simply maintain Lone Star as an independent production company.)

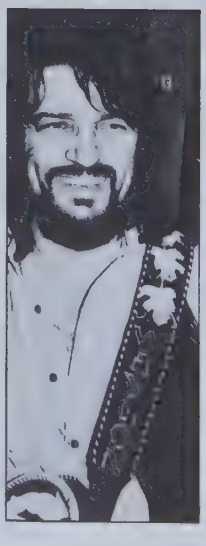
Willie also recently opened Willie Nelson Music in Nashville, his own music publishing company.

Privacy has become more and more difficult for Willie to maintain in his Austin home, so he bought a large house just outside Denver. He also maintains an apartment in Malibu, California. As for where he really lives, it's hard to tell. . .he's never home.

As Willie gets older, he seems to get farther and farther away from the negativity and dissolution that consumed much of his earlier life. Whether he's on the road or at home he takes time from his rigorous schedule to look after his health. Every day, he runs three to five miles, and he's lost 30 pounds in the last few years. Though he's always had a fondness for whiskey and tequila, and in his earlier years, was known to experiment with pills, acid, and mescaline, these days his worst vices are Mexican grass and Perrier water. It's the grass to which Willie attributes much of his outward calmness that some people find so intriguing and mysterious. ("Course, they don't know I'm completely ripped," he once joked to *Time*).

WILLIE AND LEON RUSSELL AT 1976 FOURTH OF JULY PICNIC.

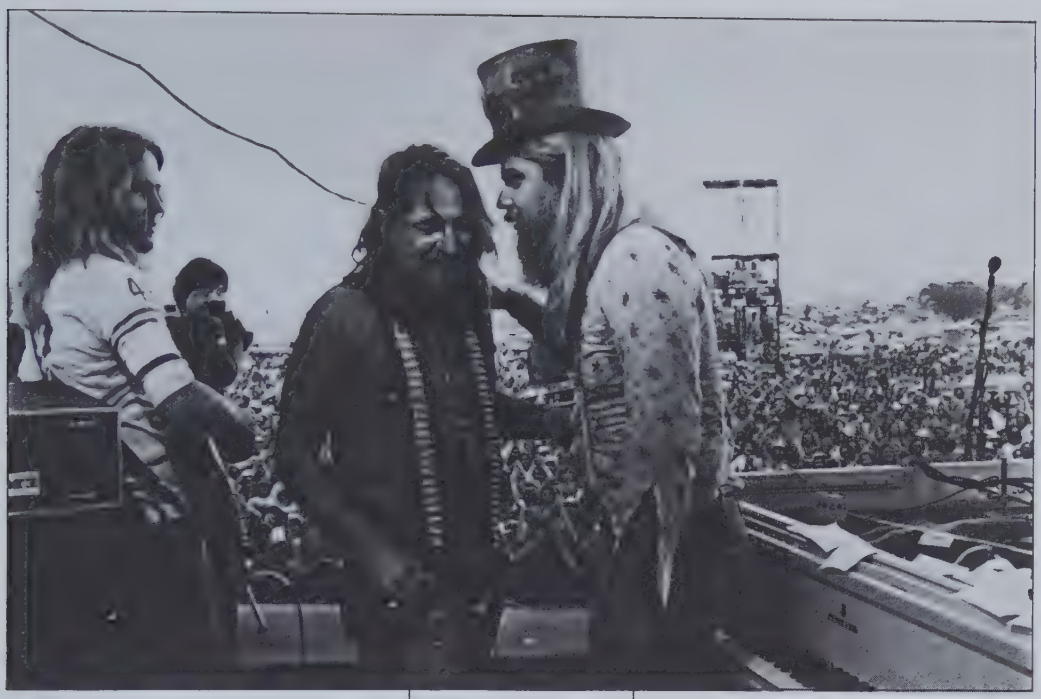
[★]



Despite all his projects, Willie maintains that he has no intention of becoming either a professional celebrity or a full time entrepreneur. His first commitment, as always, is to his music. In preparation for his latest album, with Leon Russell, more than a hundred tracks have been recorded. Willie also reportedly has enough solo tracks in the can now for two more complete albums. "Success just seems to wear well on Willie," remarked one Columbia executive, with genuine awe. "He *never* seems to let up. He'll tell us to hold everything, that he's going to take a month off, but then, a week and a half later, he's ready to go again."

As for the fast pace, Willie says he doesn't really mind. "I feel more at home in a Holiday Inn than I really do at home, because the home that I have now, I haven't been in as much as I've been in Holiday Inns, (*Country Music*).

"We all just love the road, (*Country Music*, May, 1979). "We all enjoy playing music, so it's not really that hard a work. It is hard when you're doing too *many* nights in a row and you're not getting paid enough. That's hard. I mean, everybody likes to take a week off now and then, but any longer than a week and you start to get restless and want to do it again."



In fact, Willie recently celebrated his 46th birthday, in the midst of a national tour, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. At that point in his career, he had earned four gold and three platinum albums.

At the 1979 Grammy Awards, he and Waylon were triumphant once again. His version of "Georgia On My Mind" from the platinum *Stardust* LP, won the Best Country Vocal Performance, Male category. He and Waylon jointly won the Grammy for Best Country Vocal Performance by a Group or Duo for their number one single, "Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys" from their 1978 platinum *Waylon and Willie* LP. Since they were both on tour in separate parts of the country at the time, neither was there to receive their award, prompting presenter, Glenn Campbell to remark, "Everybody knows Waylon and Willie wouldn't walk a mile to see a piss ant eat a bale of hay!"

Willie Nelson has branched out into all sorts of new projects ("I've got about a thousand new things I want to try," he told the *New York Times* in 1978.), Waylon Jennings, on the other hand, tends to stay away from the limelight. He has used his newfound financial independence to jeal-

ously guard his privacy. By 1979, he had won seven gold albums and three platinums, but he remains as elusive as ever. He makes relatively few public appearances, and grants few interviews. (In the past, Waylon has required writers who wish to interview him, the right for final copy approval of their story, before it is printed.) For companionship and emotional support, Waylon continues to rely on a small group of close, lifelong friends, like Richie Albright ("Richie Albright's always been my best friend," he once joked. "Without him, I couldn't have made it. Now I can finally give him what he earned—I'm gonna make him rich and miserable.") and his other long time bandmembers.

"I started realizing I didn't want a lot of things that came with being a star," he told Robert Hillburn of the *Los Angeles Times* in November, 1978. "I liked it when I could run loose, when I could just go out and play pinball and whatever. People always go into all that outlaw crap when they write about me. They make it sound like my main interest in life is tearing things apart. They forget that I'm a musician. That's what I've always been.

Despite his rough and tough image, Waylon has actually matured into quite a family man. While not on the road, he tends to maintain a low profile, almost reclusive sort of life with Jessi, his three teenaged daughters from previous marriages, and Jessi's teenaged daughter, Jennifer, from her previous marriage. Jessi is currently pregnant, and she and Waylon are expecting their first child together.

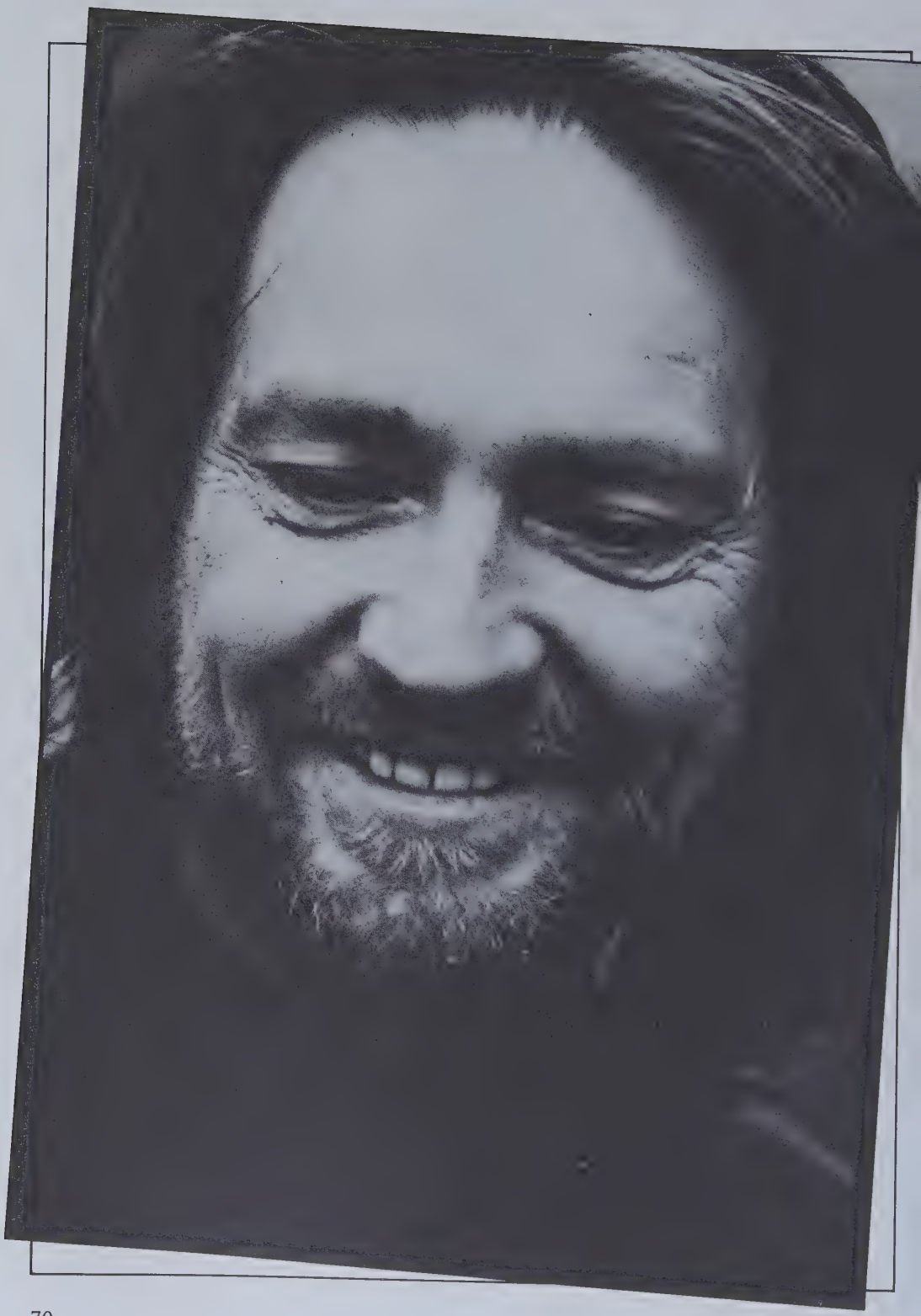
Waylon described his home life and newfound affluence to Mary Campbell of the *Associated Press*: "I live in a pretty house with a good-looking

WAYLON AND JESSI.

woman in it. And it's got a swimming pool and I can't swim and a tennis court and I can't play tennis."

Though Waylon often jokes about the discomfits and pressures of success, few people realize how difficult it has been for him, or the extent to which he has gone to learn to cope with them. "I don't like being catered to and all that star stuff, 'cause that makes a prisoner out of you one way (*The Outlaws*, 1978). "You know, all these things they write about us, about me. I laugh. I think it's funny. I'm the same person onstage as I am offstage. Just as insecure. Just as strong. Just as weak. I'll tell you, like I'm no pretty boy or anything like that. Sometimes I get self-conscious about the way I look or something. . .you know, if somebody laughs out there, I swear to God I think they're laughing at me! I ain't kidding you. Now is that funny? I mean, really, when I hear somebody laughing, I think my fly is undone or something. I really play music, you know, and I really don't pay too much attention to anything but the music.

"I've been in isolation since last August," he added. "I've been to one club and that's the only place I've been. I went to two movies and one nightclub since last August, and I've gone to the office and I've gone home. On the road I usually get in the car and they take me to the hotel. No, really, I don't like that. But I try to figure out ways to cope with it, and it's hard. I just. . . that's just not the part I wanted."



Who Is Willie Nelson?

Chapter 8

WILLIE IS AN ENTERTAINER who loves to perform more than anything else, and who clearly enjoys the good-natured adulation of his fans and admirers. He generates excitement wherever he goes. He's capable of staying up for three days in a row to keep up with the action. Yet amidst whatever madness surrounds him, he always seems to move at his own leisurely, graceful pace.

Willie is also a man of outward contradition. He wears a gaudy diamond ring, which he's had for nearly a decade. ("It's my one vulgar display of wealth," he jokes.) Contrasting the ring is his ancient, battered Martin acoustic guitar which is so old that a four-inch gash has been worn through the soundboard by two decades of finger-picking. The guitar is covered with the carved autographs of his friends: Waylon, Kris Kristofferson, Leon Russell, and Ray Charles.

Despite the ease with which Willie commands the spotlight, and his fondness for bright head bands and colorful T-shirts, he can still blend in with his audience. After his

shows he often spends hours signing autographs, either backstage or out in the parking lot. (He was once thrown out of the backstage area after one of his own concerts by an over zealous security guard who didn't recognize him.)

If there is any key to the essential Willie Nelson, however, it is his music. For the last twenty-five years, he has lived and breathed it, and devoted his life to it. Today, it is not surprising that Willie is one of the most influential forces at work in country music. Columnist Jack Hurst, a respected music critic, ran out of adjectives describing the remarkable musical progress of Willie Nelson and referred to him simply as "a 45-year-old genius."

But as Willie himself recently observed, "I haven't changed. I'm doing basically the same thing I've been doing all along. Our music is good, and I think it took a long time for anyone to hear it. And the people who hear it, they like it, and they want to come and see it."

A look at Willie's musical development shows, in fact, that throughout the course of his two and a half decades in the business and his relatively recent rise to fame Willie *hasn't* changed his music all that much. He has stayed close to the fundamental country idioms in which he began working, though the songs he has written have been recorded by artists in almost every genre of American music.

Willie feels a strong loyalty toward country music. As he sees it, he has now gained the attention of a whole new audience that has never even heard many of the great songs from the heritage of country music. He has indicated that part of his mission is to revitalize this music and to expose it to this new, young audience—and to keep it alive. Among the projects that Willie would like to work on in the future are "an album of George Jones songs, or a Hank Williams album, or an album of Kris Kristofferson songs, or a Bob Wills or Carl Smith or Webb Pierce. . .There are really hundreds of songs, real good songs, . . .(and) an audience out there that hasn't even heard them yet." (*Country Music,* May, 1979).

"I feel like a country artist and a country singer," he added to Ed Ward (*Rolling Stone*). "I play country guitar, live in the country, I eat country food, so I'm a country boy, and I play country music. They talk about progressive country, but there's only progressive listeners."

Willie Nelson is far more than just another country singer, running through a set of songs shoved down his throat by a dictatorial Music Row producer. Willie has complete creative control over his music. He makes all the decisions concerning his music (and his business enterprises);

he produces most of his albums himself, and he uses his own roadband in the studio on most sessions.

Still, there is another side to Willie Nelson's personality an aura of sorts that generated through his music, and his mere presence, influences the lives of people in positive ways. (As Waylon once jokingly remarked, "Down in Texas, they think that when they die, they go to Willie's house!") He actually has disciples—those who will drive hundreds of miles to see him perform, and to seek out his advice on any number of personal matters. Among them is Gary Busey, star of *The Buddy Holly Story*. Whenever Gary becomes confused, or needs guidance about some aspect of his career, Willie is the person he turns to.

Willie seems uneasy when he's referred to as a spiritual leader or guru, but he acknowledges that he does indeed hold deep convictions that influence the kinds of songs he sings and the way he lives his life. "I am religious, even though I don't go to church," he told Chet Flippo (*Rolling Stone*). "I believe in reincarnation. . . .There are answers in music. Poems and music about our problems are good for us to hear—how other people react to the same problems and live through them and survive."

Willie is also an avid reader and a deep thinker. "Betwen Edgar Cayce and a lot of the

mystery schools that I've gotten interested in over the years, like the Rosicrucians. . . there's a lot of food for thought. A lot of it makes sense. It's based on reincarnation and karma, and that's logical to me" (*Country Music*, 1977).

But make no mistake about it; despite his spiritual inclinations, Willie has both feet planted on the ground in the world of the here-and-now. One of the more down-to-earth manifestations of his character is a legendary temper that flares when he is pushed too far. As *Time* reported, when Willie goes "too long between tokes," he gets "hyper." His impatience is apt to manifest itself against continually ringing phones, which he's been known to rip out of the wall; and at closed doors, which he's been known to kick down while carrying the key in his pocket.

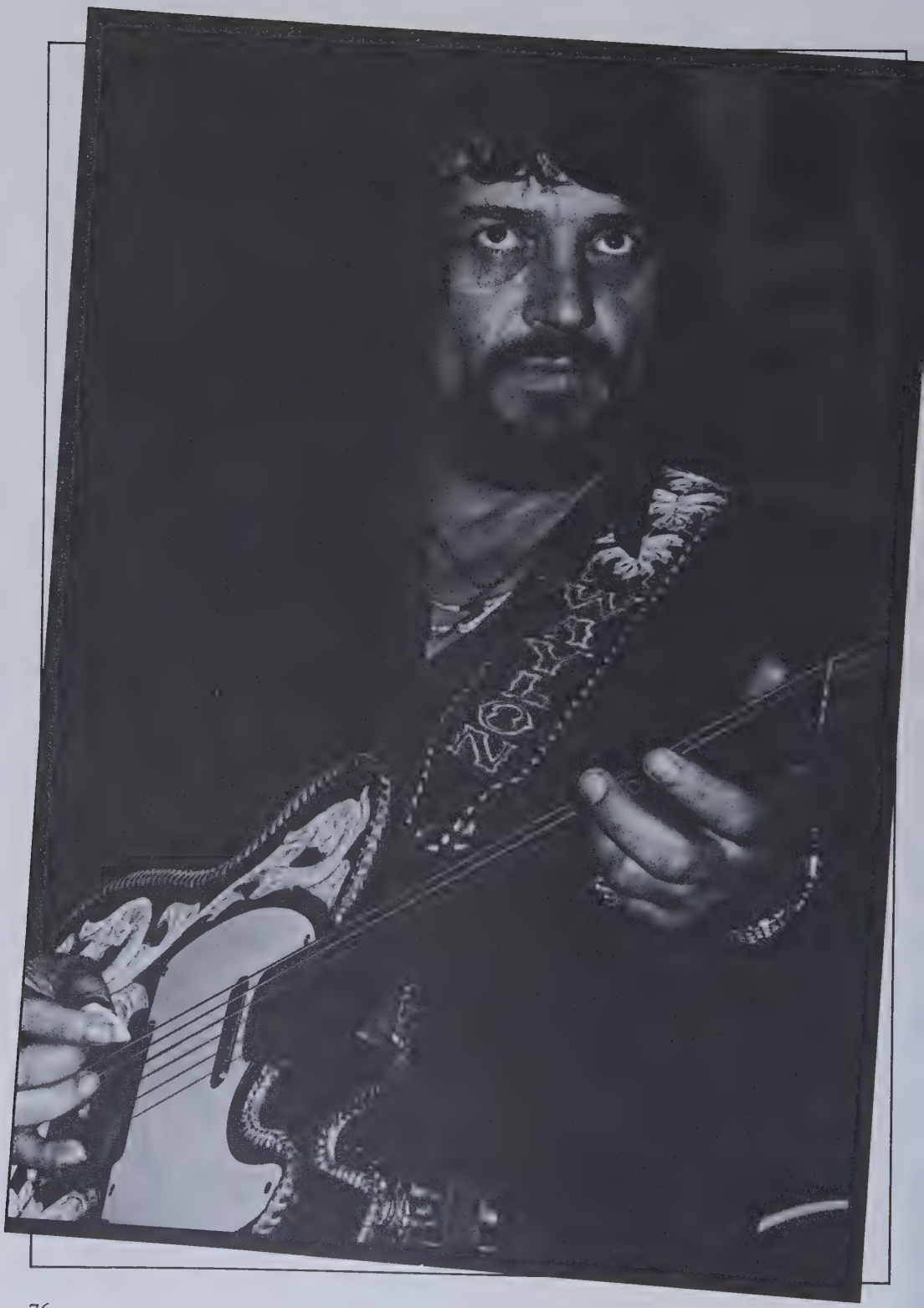
Willie, like Waylon, has had his share of skirmishes with the law and the press. He was particularly disturbed, a few years back, by an article that ran in *Texas Monthly* that branded him, "Cocaine Willie." "He [the writer, Jan Reid] pissed me off right at first when he started calling me 'Cocaine Willie,' " he told Nelson Allen. "I don't like cocaine and never have. In Fort Worth, I was never known as 'Cocaine Willie.' "

Later, in the aftermath of that article, there was more

trouble when two members of Willie's "family" (a tight knit, loyal group of people who travel with Willie, including his band, his road crew, and friends) cornered John Reed, a guitar player in an Austin night club. Mistaking him for the writer, they threatened him with permanent bodily injury. Around this same time, the FBI began trailing Willie's group, looking for Jimmy Renton, a friend of some members of Willie's entourage who was on the FBI's ten most-wanted list. In 1978, there was further scandal when it surfaced that $5,000 which Willie had lent to one Travis Schnautz was used to open the D.W. Rubb Massage Parlor in Austin. Schnautz was later killed by a fatal shotgun blast, allegedly administered by contract killers. The only thing that this all proves about Willie, one local reporter concluded, is that he is overly generous with his money, and not careful enough who he lends it to.

IT'S INEVITABLE THAT IN A CAREER AS LONG AND MOMENTOUS AS WILLIE'S THERE WILL BE SOME ROUGH SPOTS.

It's inevitable though, that in a career as long and momentous as Willie's there will be some rough spots; and if there is anything that Willie has learned, it is patience. He is certainly not seriously disarmed by his occasional bits of negative press; he has seen the fads and fashions come and go, but *he* has persisted, and ultimately, prevailed. His career, despite occasional improprieties, has been a study of professional and emotional maturation of one of the most gifted popular artists of our era. Willie has jostled with just about every emotional and creative windmill that got in his way, and he has emerged the winner on all counts. "Maybe my songs bring out sympathy," he spectulated to Stephanie Mansfield (*The Washington Post*). "You know, let's hear it for the old man. I think people just identify with me emotionally as a survivor."



Waylon Jennings: The Man

Chapter 9

[S]EVENTEEN HAS CALLED Waylon Jennings "the Humphrey Bogart of country." It's a fitting description, one that's stuck with him for some time now. Indeed, the first impression one gets of Waylon is that of a tough guy. There's a slight swagger to his walk, he shifts his large frame restlessly and seems incapable of standing still for long, and in his eyes, there is always a fleeting trace of tension and hardness. It's as if there are few public settings in which he actually feels at ease. He has a fondness for tight Levis, leather vests, flat-brimmed hats worn at an angle, and sunglasses. There is usually a small cigar or cigarette clenched between his teeth. He gives the impression of one who in his day has had some run-ins with some nasty habits, and has learned to live by his wits.

But like Bogart, Waylon has hidden beneath that relatively brazen and disarming exterior, the soul of a kind and generous man. Journalists who do manage to interview him usually come away awed by his politeness and quick sense of

humor. ("I'm an introvert in an extroverted business," he has often said.) It is perhaps this disparity between the inner and outer man that makes for the mystique that surrounds Waylon. "I'm not the Big Bad John they think I am," (*Minneapolis Star*). "It [success] gets hard to handle every once in a while. I can't actually put a handle on it. Sometimes I feel trapped by success."

Waylon's anchor in the tempest of superstardom remains his family. For all his songs about footloose cowboys and wandering gypsies, he still spends a lot of time trying to understand people, and trying to do right with the people he loves. "I have a good relationship with my children," he told Susan Toepfer. "They've had a rough time and I'm sorry about that. It took me so long to get together anything resemblin' a family life that they've had it bad. There's been a lot of hurt on their mother's side and on mine too, and then they've had to live with a lot because of who I am and what I do.

"I guess the greatest man I ever knew was my dad," he addeed, "and he was a really religious man. He just didn't do wrong. And he didn't think *I* did too much wrong either. A while before he died, we got to be really good friends, we really understood each other, and he'd always try to figure out some way to justify any mistake I'd made. That's the kind of man he was. He liked me pretty good, and before he died, I was glad to buy them a new home, y'know, and a new car."

WAYLON WITH TRACY NELSON AT RAINBOW ROOM, JANUARY, 1978.

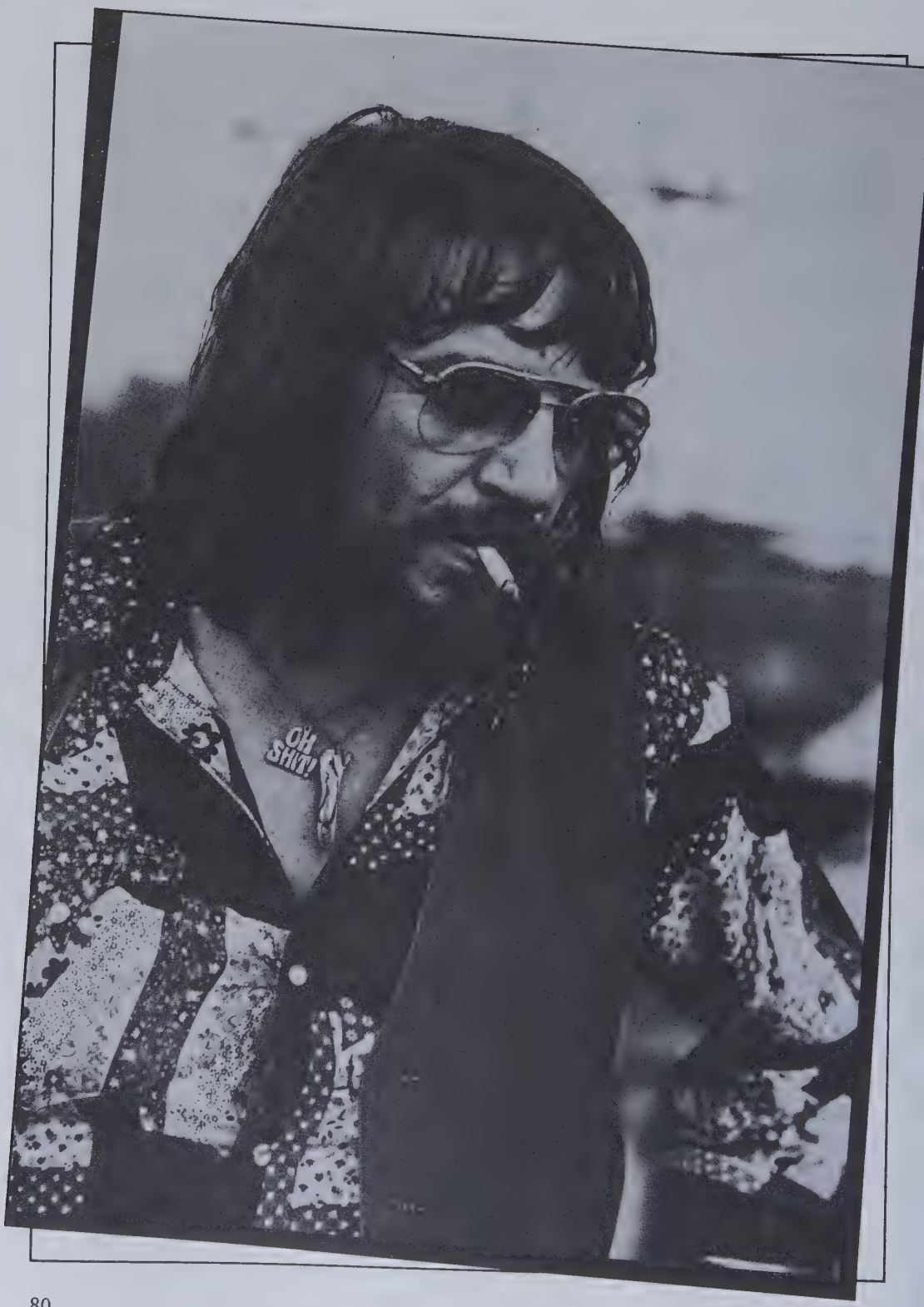
One of Waylon's biggest heroes is Muhammad Ali. In September of 1978, Waylon travelled to New Orleans for the World Heavyweight Championship between Ali and Leon Spinks. He visited Ali in his dressing room and the two of them talked for a long time. Friends of Waylon noted that he was apparently deeply moved by this meeting, and said little for the next few days. "Muhammad Ali is my hero," he told Bob Campbell (*Country Music* , February, 1979). "He really is. I think he's the greatest thing to happen in twenty years."

But the person who has a special place in Waylon's heart —besides Jessi, of course— is his compadre of so many years, Willie Nelson. "There's just something about Willie," (*Outlaws: Revolution In Country Music*). "We're brothers from somewhere, and we're together, right or wrong, to the end and ain't nobody gonna separate us."

The greatest part of Waylon's appeal, outside of his brilliant and distinctive vocal style, is his electric stage presence. When he's on stage, his rough, unkempt appearance, his quick movements, and his hard, scowling look, generates an electricity that

is unparalleled. There are only a few artists that have this degree of magnetism and very few in country music. Elvis Presley, in his prime, had it. Jagger and Richards and Rod Stewart have it in their better moments. It has as much to do with the man's sheer presence as it does with his music. Kris Kristofferson has called Waylon, "the best country singer in the world." The *New York Times* went a step further: "When contemporary music is so filled with neurotic, tortured characters, it's reassuring to hear a real man like Waylon." Robert Hillburn, the influential music critic of the *Los Angeles Times,* assessed Waylon as "one of the most exciting and distinctive new country rtists in years. . .[he is] the natural descendant of the country-rock singers who reshaped pop music in the late 1950s.

Waylon sums up the impact that he and Willie have had in modest terms. "The reason everybody can relate to our music, I guess, is because it's so basic. Our music is honest and simple. We symbolize to many people, honesty and fighting for what you believe in. And honesty is something you can't wear out."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Waylon Jennings: Present & Future

Chapter 10

BY LATE 1978, WAYLON Jennings had amassed four platinum and seven gold albums, and had celebrated his 41st birthday. Since then it has been a time of introspection and activity. He has turned his attention to his musical roots, and, at the same time, ventured cautiously into new areas.

By this time, Waylon and Willie had become the new kings of modern country music. They, along with veteran Johnny Cash, had become the most respected and influential artists working in the field. Perhaps that is why it was so gratifying to country fans when Waylon teamed up with his old roommate Johnny Cash, and for the first time ever, the two of them recorded and made live appearances.

Waylon had not appeared on the stage of Nashville's Grand Old Opry for more than twelve years. (In the past, he had had his share of philosophical differences with this tradition

conscious organization which, until recently, did not even permit the use of a full drum set on its stage.) So it was a special thrill for those in attendance one Saturday night when he and Cash showed up for a surprise appearance.

Later, the two of them did a number of concerts together in the mid-Tennessee area. They also released a spirited duet, "Ain't No Good Chain Gang." The song, like most with Waylon's name on it, slid right into the number one spot. "I'd rather be around Johnny Cash than anybody I know," Waylon told Bob Campbell (*Country Music*). "He just knocks me out. We have more fun together. We get nervous when we get up there and sing before an audience because we've never done that before. I tell you, John and I are closer than brothers. We went through the wild years—the drug scene. We hid them from each other and lied to each other. We had to get away from each other to pull it back together."

WAYLON DURING TV APPEARANCE WITH JOHNNY CASH.

In September, 1978, Waylon's LP, *I've Always Been Crazy* was released. It became the first country-marketed LP ever to *ship* gold on the day of release. Though musically it is somewhat uneven, it is the most adventurous and personal LP that Waylon has ever recorded. It has a strong autobiographical flavor on many of the cuts, and it's a tribute to his musical roots. Waylon co-produced the record with Richie Albright.

"This album is a little bit of everything I have ever done," he told Bob Campbell. "I like it. If you listen to it, it seems like it touches on just about everything. I think when a guy gets about forty, everybody looks back then.

"That's me, right there!" he added, referring to the title song, 'I've Always Been Crazy'. "I wrote that about myself,

and it's really true. Bein' crazy is probably the *only* thing that 's kept me from goin' insane. But a lot of people have come up to me since, and said, 'That song is just like me!' So I guess other people can relate to it too."

The album, *"I've Always Been Crazy,* includes a number of other songs with obvious references to significant events in Waylon's life. "Don't You Think This Outlaw Bit's Done Got Out Of Hand" is a graphic recollection of the trauma of his drug bust: "I'm for law and order, the way that it should be / This song's about the night they spent, protecting you from me. / Someone called us outlaws in some old magazine. / New York sent a posse down like I

DAVID ALLEN COE WITH WAYLON.

ain't never seen." The song is full of urgency, and the nervous energy Waylon pours into it is so overwhelming that you feel at any minute, it's going to bust loose in a frenzy of musical fury. The song—and the singing—are full of rage, anger, frustration, and bewilderment; it's a great showcase of the incredible emotive range of Waylon's voice. It's this capacity for subtlety and nuance that sets him miles apart from everyone else even approaching his stature as a vocalist. One of the most compelling cuts on the album is a medley of Buddy Holly hits ("Well All Right," "It's So Easy," "Maybe Baby," and "Peggy Sue"), which was produced by Duane Eddy and features members of Buddy's original band, the Crickets (of which Waylon was once a member). The album also includes an unusual version of "I Walk The Line," which was one of Johnny Cash's first hits back in the early fifties, and "Billy," a poignant tribute to Willie Nelson.

On the strength of his phenomenal record sales of the past few years, Waylon resigned with RCA in early 1979 for what was reported to be one of the highest royalty rates in the industry.

In late 1978, the old "outlaw" tag cropped up again when it was reported in *Rolling Stone*'s "Random Notes" that "Waylon and his entourage of 200" sacked a motel in Flagstaff, Arizona after a concert at Northern Arizona University. The group reportedly laid seige to a banquet room until dawn, then returned to their rooms, threw sand in the air conditioners, emptied ice machines on the floor, and ripped down curtains and light fixtures. The report of this incident went out over the syndicated news services, and at least one local paper ran a picture of Jennings with

the caption, ". . .still an outlaw."

1979 was the year Waylon finally ventured into the film medium again. (He had played a top-billed role in a B-grade film, *Nashville Rebel* which was produced by American International and filmed in Nashville in 1966. The late Tex Ritter also starred in the film.) He has an acting role in Paramount Picture's *The Urban Cowboy*, starring John Travolta. The film is based on an *Esquire* cover story about the cowboy subculture at Gilley's Club in Houston, Texas. Waylon and the Waylors also have been busy recording the musical soundtrack, and bits of narration for the successful CBS-TV series, *The Dukes of Hazzard.*

As Waylon's fame has grown, it has become harder and harder for him to cling to the anonymous, footloose kind of lifestyle he prefers; and it's been harder for him to keep out of the scrutiny of the public eye. He has remained rather skeptical about the press. Although he postponed the actual interview time and time again, Patrick Carr, a former editor of *Country Music*, was able to spend several days with Waylon earlier this year. He described him as friendly, cooperative, and exceedingly generous with his time. Waylon only grew uneasy when they actually got around to sitting down and switching the tape recorder on. "I had a lot of problems with me saying one thing and somebody printing another," he told Bob Campbell recently. "If people would just tell the truth—what was really said. Another thing is where I'm at. This outlaw stuff and macho stuff. That's not what it's all about. They come in and talk to you and don't want to hear a damn thing you are saying about your music."

Perhaps most important of 1979's events is the impending arrival of another child—his first with Jessi. Recently he was asked jokingly by Nashville writer Susan Ganry if outlaws make good daddies.

"That ain't the question," he replied with a chuckle. "What I want to know is, do daddies make good outlaws!"

WILLIE WHO?

CHAPTER 11

[A]S 1979 UNFOLDS, WAYlon Jennings and Willie Nelson have made few commitments to either perform or record together; but it is doubtful that the two of them will keep out of each other's way for long. The musical and personal bonds that exist between these two men run deep. And both have shown themselves, over the years, to have a sense of loyalty to each other that transcends either money or fame.

Nashville writer, Bob Campbell asked Waylon in early 1979, about their future plans. "Willie who?" Waylon laughed. "I don't care where he is or what. If he wants to pick and grin, we'll work together, sure. He can't do without me!. . . . Willie is my brother. There is no rift between Willie and me at all. . . .Me and Willie have been through a lot of briar patches together. And we will go again if we have to."

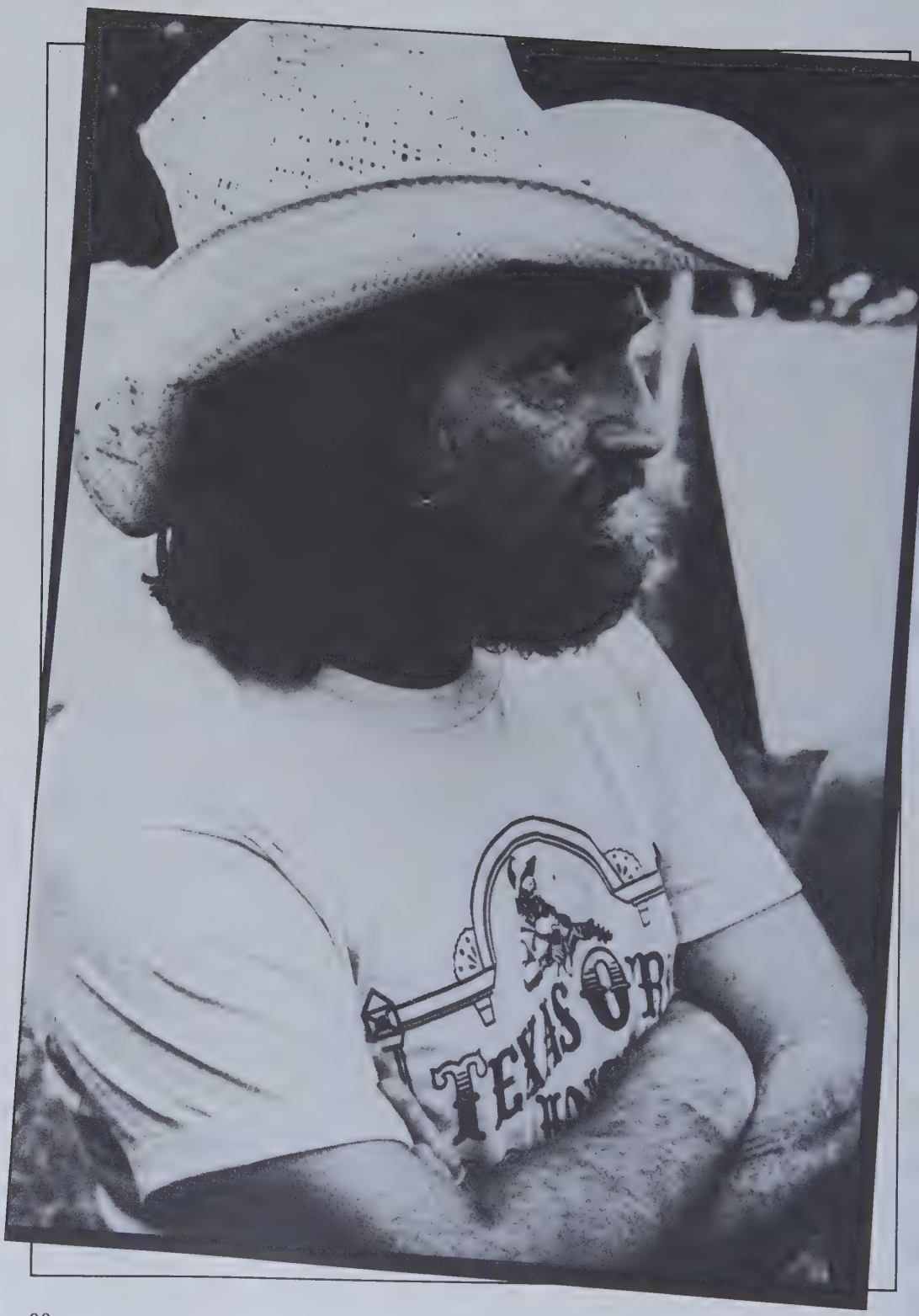
A few months later, Willie was asked the same question by Michael Bane. "I don't know," he replied thoughtfully. "Everybody seems to be, if not causing trouble between me and Waylon, to at least try and say that there's trouble between us. But as far as I know, there's not. Some peo-

ple don't like it when people are too good friends or are too successful. It doesn't matter whether you're in music or whether you're two good plumbers with the most business in town."

With all the obstacles and personal crises that Waylon and Willie have waded through together over the past five or six years, it's doubtful that much of anything—except the physical distance that each one's separate touring schedule often puts between them—could keep them apart for long.

What they are left with then, in the wake of their phenomenal success , is a sense of triumph. After holding out for years, keeping their musical integrity intact, they took on an entire industry. Armed only with their tenacity and their musical values, they bucked the entire antiquated Nashville studio system—and they prevailed. Years ago, when everyone else thought they were half out of their minds, they *believed*; they believed in themselves, and believed they had something unique that was worth holding on to. They held on through the numerous ebbs and flows of musical trends, and through numerous personnel shifts in the upper echelons of the country music industry. And. . .as they say . . .what comes 'round, comes 'round. . . .By God, they prevailed. With all the accomplishments they have behind them, and with all the musical contributions they have made, the two of them can rest easy. For whatever is yet to come, Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson. have already guaranteed themselves a place in the pantheon of modern American popular music.

WHAT THEY ARE LEFT WITH IN THE WAKE OF THEIR PHENOMENAL SUCCESS IS A SENSE OF TRIUMPH.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Willie Nelson: Musical Evolution

Chapter 12

WILLIE NELSON, PERHAPS more than any other contemporary artist, is a weathervane of mid-twentieth century American musical influences. There can be found in various phases of his music—his singing, his writing, and his guitar style—traces of black rural blues, white country gospel, Texas honky-tonk, Western swing, early rock 'n' roll, Tin Pan Alley, early American pop music, and even Mexican music. He has assimilated these disparate influences into a personal style that is very much his own. Yet, working within this framework, he continues to surprise listeners with something new every time he releases another LP.

There is nothing studied or cerebral about Willie's music either. He seems to sing, perform, and record for the sheer joy of it. On an intuitive level, he has grasped the most basic functions of human emotion and interaction that music satisfies, like the call and re-

sponse of early blues and gospel, or the soothing quality of the country church choir. He is a natural conduit between the emotional power of popular music and his audience. At his live concerts in Texas and elsewhere, he has been known to stand on an open stage under the blazing sun and sing for hours at a time. "He plays with the vibrant enthusiasm of a Fats Waller," observed Al Rheinart in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine,* "with the gleeful fulfillment of an artist who has finally found his audience, and through them, himself. He is truly happy to be there, playing his music, and it shows."

"Willie has an amazing voice, an amazingly rich voice," adds Jerry Wexler. (*New York Times Sunday Magazine.*) "It can be deceptive though, you can't always tell how rich it is unless you hear him with others. And he has incredible endurance. I've heard him sing four or five hour sets and still bend every note where he wanted."

Second to Willie's voice is his guitar playing which is also an unusual blending of styles. On the strings of his battered Martin, he plays long intricate linear lead runs and tasteful fills and flourishes that have more to do with urban blues than with country and western. Faint traces of Mexican sounds can be heard.

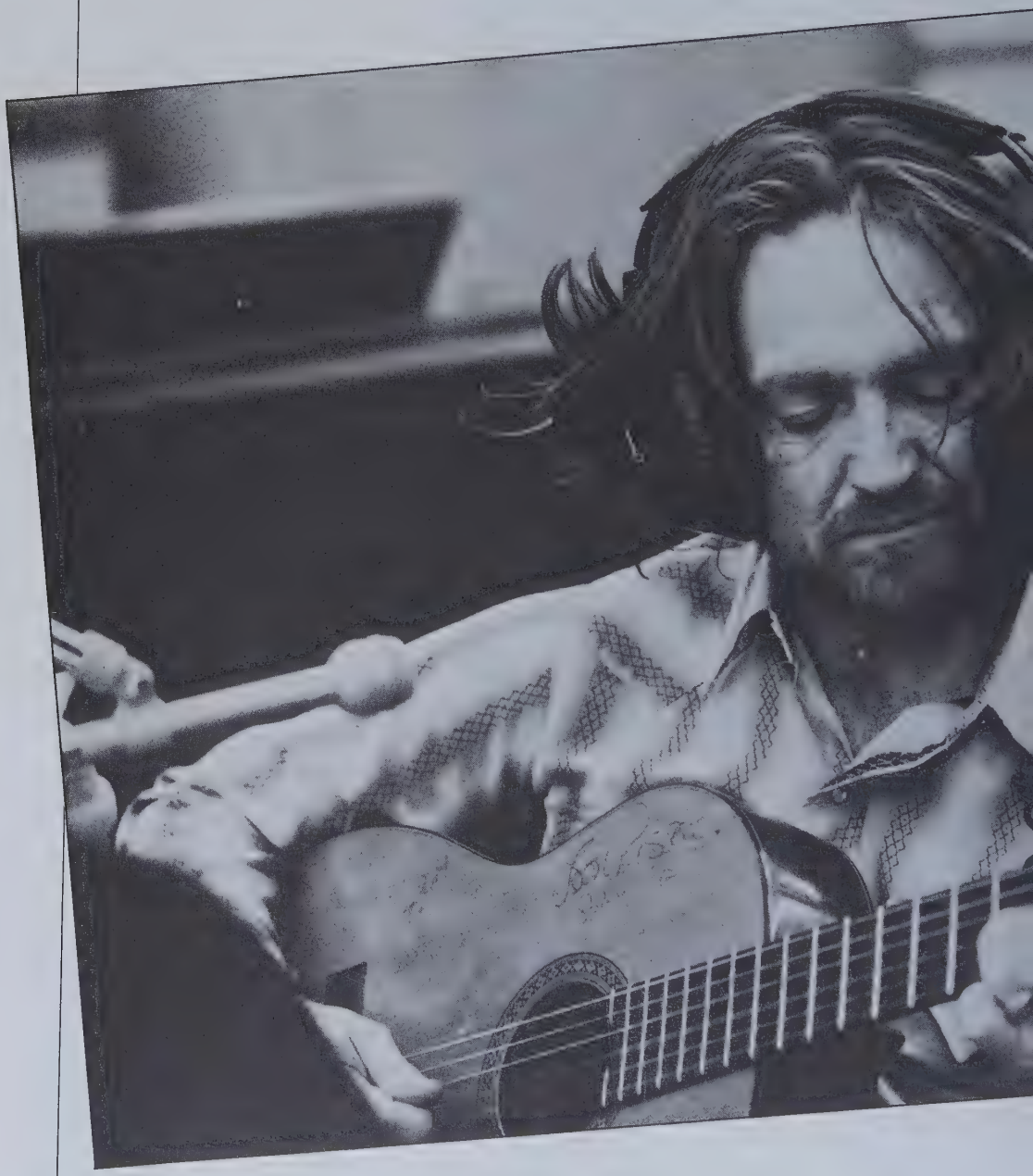
Willie's earliest recordings confirm what he has often said: "I haven't changed. I'm doing basically the same thing I've been doing all along." Some of the earliest recordings of Willie that are still widely available are some tracks that survive from demo sessions that he did "somewhere in Nashville, Tennesee" in 1961. (Before that, he made numerous other trips into the studio, however. While in Seattle, he recorded and pressed a single record on his own which is now a collector's item. He also made a number of records around Texas, including some that were bought and rereleased on an LP called *Willie Nelson and Friends* on Plantation Records in 1976. (see discography.) These early Nashville sessions have recently been reissued on at least two different albums: *Face Of A Fighter* on Willie's own Lone Star Records, and *Willie Nelson 1961* on Double Barrell Records, a small Texas label. In the early sixties, before going to RCA, Willie recorded several albums for Liberty Records. Most of this material has, in the past few years, been reissued in several LP's released by United Artists. (See discography.) These recordings are crude and unsophisticated compared to his later RCA albums, but you can hear on them, a Willie Nelson who as early as 1961, had matured into a singer and guitarist no less accomplished than he is today. These early recordings contain versions of some of his most enduring com-

WILLIE SIGNING AUTOGRAPHS AT A DISC JOCKEY CONVENTION.

positions, including "Crazy," "Hello Walls," and "Funny How Time Slips Away," proving that he had already matured into a writer of incredible depth.

(Willie's more recent albums have included few original songs. In fact, the 1975 *Red Headed Stranger* had only five; the 1977 *To Lefty From Willie* had none, as did the 1978 *Stardust* LP. When recently asked by Nelson Allen (*Country Music,* May, 1979) what his reaction was to the critics who had picked up on this, he replied, "Well, I don't care. I could do and probably will sometime, another *Yesterday's Wine* or *Red Headed Stranger*, a whole conception thing again, but I wrote songs for forty years; sometimes when I was a kid, I'd stack up five or six songs a day, and if I want to take a little vacation now, that's my business."

Even though the mixes are rough on many of these early recordings, they are in some ways, more authentic and satisfying than many of the tracks on his later RCA LP's. They're closer to the nitty-gritty gravel-voiced Willie Nelson that we've more recently come to know and love. Many of the arrangments have a freewheeling, spur-of-the-moment spontaneity about them than much of what was to follow. Already, the lyrics convey the thoughtfulness and sophistication that would mark most of his material throughout his career. In his songs, he grapples with the usual dilemmas of leaving, being left, of pain, anger, jealousy, and sadness. Yet his attempts to deal with these emotions are often expressed in the wider context of an implied spiritual unrest, or a mortal sadness over the sadness over the passage of time. Some of the songs have almost mystic overtones. "The End Of Understanding," for in-



THE *WILLIE NELSON AND FAMILY ALBUM* IS A TESTAMENT TO THE END OF HIS FRUSTRATING NASHVILLE DAYS.

stance, expresses a yearning for peace of mind beyond the limitations of rational understanding.

Willie's first Liberty album, *And Then I Wrote,* which has since been re-released by United Artists as *The Best of Willie Nelson,* is marked with a distinct sort of country-politan sound that was popular in country music at the time: sparse arrangements with light drums and lilting Floyd Cramer-style piano, with occasional touches of strings in the background. But Willie's voice is the same—though perhaps not quite as relaxed. The album features some of his best songs, including what is perhaps the definitive version of "Crazy."

The more than fifteen albums (including reissues and other "best of" packages) that RCA released during and after the near decade he spent on that label, supply a tremendous body of work that documents Willie's musical development throught his Nashville years. These hundreds of tracks include some clunkers—as well as some real gems.

The Willie Nelson And Family album, released in 1971, after Willie had made the move back to Texas, is a musical testament to the end of his frustrating Nashville days. In addition to several original songs, it includes his versions of four or five of the most soulful downers in the pantheon of modern music: Hank Williams' "I'm So Lone-

some I Could Cry," Kris Kristofferson's "Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down," Merle Haggard's "Today I Started Lovin' You Again," and James Taylor's "Fire And Rain." Some of these renditions are just fine, but on others, though Willie attacks them with great enthusiasm, his voice reaches uneasily past its limitations. The album also includes a rocking up-tempo "Kneel At The Feet Of Jesus," which is quite a contrast to other material on the album. But the most enduring and unsettling cut is the song Willie wrote with Hank Cochran shortly before leaving Nashville, "What Can You Do To Me Now." It is a bitterly sad, yet beautiful song that expresses overwhelming frustration and defeat. "What can you do to me now/that you haven't done already/You broke my pride/and made me cry out loud/What can you do to me now."

Sweet Memories, an LP that RCA released early in 1979, long after Willie had left that label, is a sampler of stronger tracks from his earlier RCA LP's. It represents vintage Willie Nelson from his Nashville period. His voice, or so it seems, has been re-mixed so it's up full and clear over the sometimes heavy-handed string arrangements. "Sweet Memories," the title song (written by Mickey Newbury) is one of his most memorable recordings from those years. Similarly moving is the evocative

original, "December Day." These are the kind of sad, plaintive, and introspective songs that Willie is often at home with, both as a writer and interpreter. The album contains six Nelson originals, and is only slightly marred by his less convincing versions of popular tunes like "Both Sides Now" and "Everybody's Talkin'."

The most outstanding album that has survived and is still in issue from Willie's RCA years is, of course, *Yesterday's Wine,* a poignant collection of material unified by themes of confusion and reconciliation in the context of a relationship with God. Recorded in the late sixties, the album is years ahead of its time. Willie wrote all the songs on *Yesterday's Wine,* and the album has a stronger personal feeling than anything he had done previously. Again, there are overtones of mysticism and strains of soothing religious didacticism.

From RCA, Willie went to Atlantic, and the two albums he recorded for that label mark his transition from the stilted Nashville sound to the live, raw sound he brought to his later LP's. Instead of the pop influence of string arrangements and choices of material found on his later RCA LP's, *Shotgun Willie,* his first Atlantic LP (1973) shows a return to his rawer, more vital musical influences. This time he's got his own band playing be-

hind him in the studio and has additional help from outstanding pickers like Johnny Gimble (fiddle), Doug Sahm (electric guitar), and Waylon Jennings (acoustic guitar). The title cut is a boisterous, humorous number that was written on the spur of the moment, and it makes it sound like they were having fun in the studio this time around. The album's strident tone is further set by "Whiskey River," an electrifying Johnny Bush song (Willie still uses this as the theme to open his live show); and two Bob Wills/Tommy Duncan (of the original Texas Playboys, the outstanding band of the Texas Swing era): "Stay All Night (Stay A Little Longer)" and "Bubbles In My Beer." The album also includes two Leon Russell originals, "A Song For You," and "You Look Like The Devil," along with updated versions of seven Willie Nelson originals—most of them from his Nashville years.

Phases And Stages, Willie's second Atlantic LP, was recorded in Muscle Shoals, Alabama and released in 1974, and it is a more introspective album than the rough and tumble *Shotgun Willie* LP. It is a concept album that tells the story of a divorce. Side one of the LP tells it from the woman's viewpoint and side two tells it from the man's perspective. As Willie explains in the liner notes, "Phases and stages, circles and cycles, scenes that we've all seen before—listen I'll tell you some more."

YESTERDAY'S WINE IS A POIGNANT COLLECTION OF MATERIAL UNIFIED BY THEMES OF CONFUSION AND RECONCILIATION.

After his two LP's with Atlantic, his first to enjoy any sort of significant record sales, Willie went back to Texas. There he formed his own Lone Star record label, set up a distribution deal with Columbia, and recorded his breakthrough *Red Headed Stranger* LP, which was also a startling concept album. For the first time, Willie took on the production and the results are nothing short of magic. The album is built around an involved story line of loss of love, adultery, murder, and finally, forgiveness and redemption. It is like a Greek morality play acted out against the metaphors of the old West and the music of Texas.

The success of *Red Headed Stranger* was followed closely and then propelled even further by the subsequent release of the *Outlaws* LP on RCA. After both went platinum, Willie was certifiably a "superstar." Though his record company prevailed upon him to record a sure follow-up to keep the whole "Stranger/Outlaw" image rolling, Willie fooled everyone by showing his loyalty to his own musical instincts and whims. He released *The Sound In Your Mind,* which was hastily recorded in the same small Garland, Texas studio where *Red Headed Stranger* was done. The album is a musical potpourri and an informal trib-

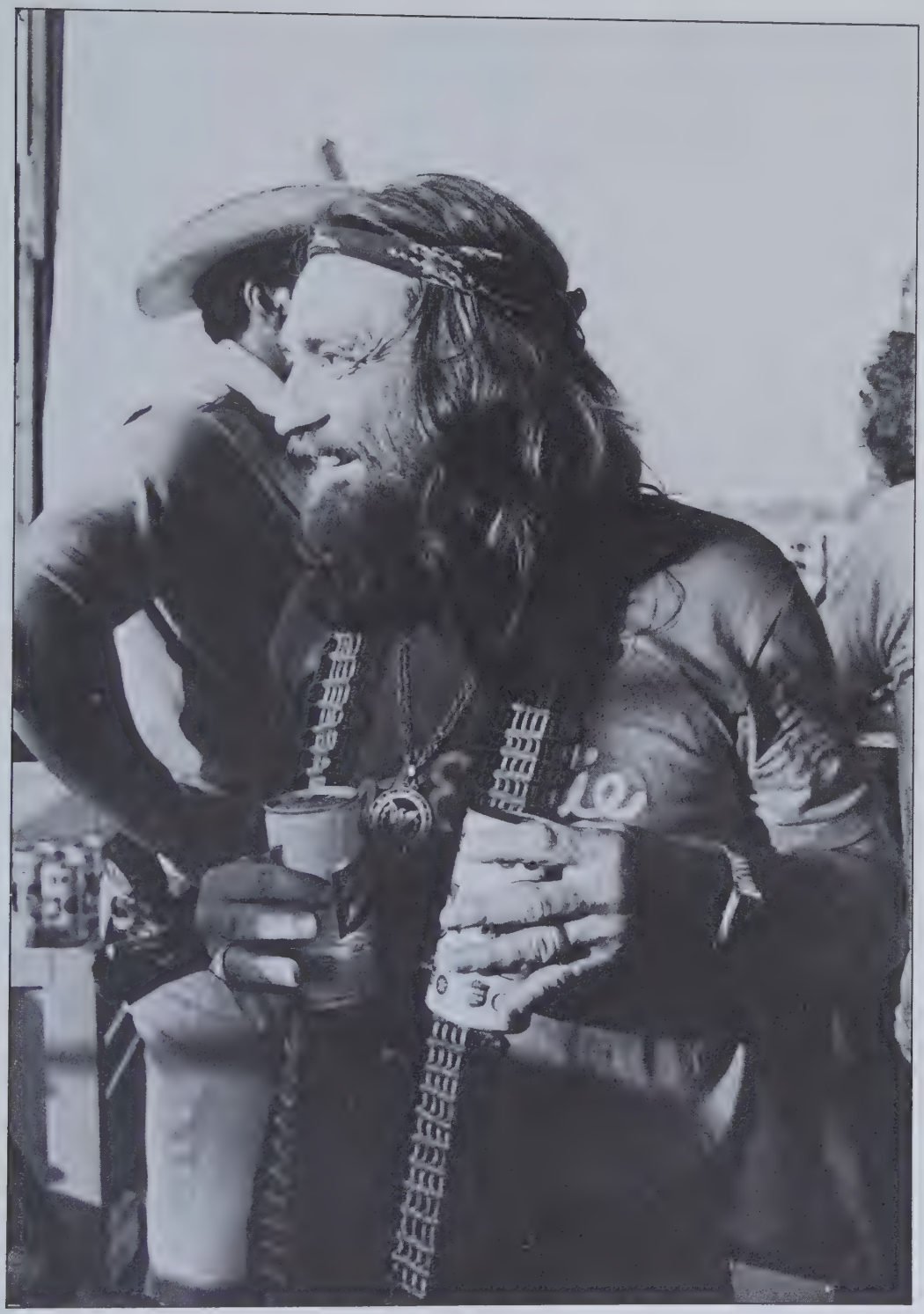
ute to Willie's musical background; many of the cuts have the same raucous live feeling that his first Atlantic LP did. The wide range of material includes the old blues standard, "Lucky Old Sun," an original Lefty Frizzell classic from the early 1950's, "If You've Got The Money, I've Got The Time," "Amazing Grace," and an original, "The Healing Hands Of Time." The album also includes five other Nelson originals, plus a medley of his three biggest songs, "Crazy"/ "Night Life"/"Funny How Time Slips Away," and an off-the-wall song by Steve Fromholz, "I'd Have To Be Crazy," which became a big hit single.

At this point, Willie was still riding the crest of the *Outlaw* explosion, and his next Columbia release took everyone by surprise. *The Troublemaker* was recorded at Atlantic studios in New York and produced by Arif Mardin who earlier co-produced *Shotgun Willie.* The album has the same gritty, austere immediacy of the first Atlantic album, but the material is something of a departure. The eleven cuts are all inspirational songs, and none of them are original. Many of the selections are traditional gospel standards with updated arrangements by Willie. Included are: "When The Roll Is Called Up Yonder," "Sweet Bye And Bye," "Will The Circle Be Unbroken," and "There Is A Fountain." Though the album lacks the drama and mystery of *Red Headed Stranger,* it is a sincere tribute to another side of his musical heritage that is very much a part of his life.

WILLIE ENJOYING THE 1976 FOURTH OF JULY PICNIC.

The 1977 release of his next Columbia LP marked yet another turn in direction. *To Lefty From Willie,* recorded in Dallas, Texas, was Willie's personal tribute to his friend, the late Lefty Frizzell, the king of Texas honky tonk music. (Willie had actually recorded this LP in 1975, but then delayed its release when Lefty died, for fear that it might appear he was exploiting his death.) In the early fifties, Frizzell dominated the country record charts. He once had four songs simultaneously in the country top ten, something that no other artist has done, either before or since.

Frizzell was the premier honky tonk singer of the fifties. Honky tonk was the style of straight-ahead barroom music that dominated the Southwest (particularly Texas and Oklahoma) during Willie's formative years. It actually started in the late thirties and Al Dexter is considered one of its pioneers, allegedly the first to ever use the phrase in a song, when he recorded "Honky Tonk Blues" in 1938. There was a large demand then for dance music and not everyone could afford to hire Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys. Small three- or four-piece bands began playing it in Texas bars



and roadhouses. These early honky tonk musicians were among the first to use electric instruments, since they needed them to overcome the noise in these lively places where they played. Honky tonk is more often defined by theme rather than by specific instrumentation. Honky tonk songs tended to be drinking and "runnin' around" songs rather than dreamy love songs. The honky tonk tradition is still alive and well today, and is being carried on by a whole generation of contemporary country artists like Moe Bandy, Gary Steward, George Jones, Merle Haggard, and Willie himself.

To Lefty From Willie has the sparse, straight-ahead quality of the earlier Atlantic and Columbia albums, and for good reason: the only people who accompany Willie on these sessions are the core of his road band. This includes Bobby Nelson, his sister, on piano, Paul English on drums, Jody Payne on guitar, Bee Spears on bass, and Mickey Raphael on harmonica (practically the same tight line-up that accompanied him on the *Red Headed Stranger* sessions). Most of the cuts on the album were songs that were big hits for Lefty way back in the early fifties (seven of the cuts were written or co-written by the late Frizzell.) There are no Willie Nelson originals included, and the only surprise is "Railroad Lady," a song by Jimmy Buffett and Jay Walker.

STARDUST IS HIS MOST EXPERIMENTAL ALBUM TO DATE.

[★]

Stardust, Willie's next Columbia LP, released in 1978 is his most experimental album to date. It came as a surprise and delight to most of his fans. It is a more adventurous departure from his musical background than anything he'd ever before attempted. The album contains a collection of old pop standards, many of which were copyrighted before Willie was born—popular classics by George and Ira Gershwin, Duke Ellington, and Irving Berlin—songs that undoubtedly influenced Willie as a writer during his earlier years. The album was produced by Booker T. Jones and was recorded in front of a fireplace in producer Brian Ahern's house in Beverly Hills, with the help of Ahern's mobile recording unit. It includes such favorites as "Stardust," "Georgia On My Mind," "Blue Skies," "All Of Me," and "Moonlight In Vermont." "It was a big gamble," Willie told Chet Flippo (*Rolling Stone*). "I had the idea for some time, but until I met Booker T. Jones who produced *Stardust,* I wasn't sure in my mind, how well I could do these songs because of my limited musical ability, as far as writing down songs of this calibre. These are complicated songs: They have lots of chords in them. I needed someone like Booker to write and arrange. Once I got with him, it was easy to do the album."

Stardust was a huge success. Out of it came several hit sin-

gles, including "Blue Skies," "All Of Me," "Georgia On My Mind," and "September Song." Though the critics were skeptical, it got wide airplay, hit the top of the charts, and was Willie's first solo LP since *Red Headed Stranger* to reach platinum. *Stardust* is beautifully packaged with a cover painting by Susanna Clark and a photograph of Willie on the back in full regalia—a black felt hat with a bright headband, a bright blue neckerchief, and a colorful cowboy shirt. As one writer noted, "Too bad Nelson didn't release this album two years ago during the Bicentennial. It's a fine slice of Americana, a warmly refreshing merger of earthy rural vocals and sophisticated urban songs. . . .Yet this is still 'Country Willie'. The Austin-meets-Broadway tone is captivatingly original."

In early 1976, riding the crest of Willie's fame, RCA repackaged and reissued the *Country Music Concert* LP they had released in 1965, under the new title of *Willie Nelson Live.* The album consists of material recorded at one of his early live concerts at Fort Worth Texas's Panther Hall, in the early1960's. It includes Willie's original band, The Record Men. It is an uneven, yet exciting collection that unfortunately pales next to the vibrance of the live shows he gives today. Yet it gives an early glimpse of Willie Nelson, the incipient per-

former. In 1979, Willie and Columbia decided to update things with a live LP of their own, and the result was the double LP, *Willie And Family Live,* which was recorded in April, 1978 at Harrah's Casino, Lake Tahoe, Nevada. Within a few months of its release, it was certified gold. Ironically, *Willie And Family Live* is more subdued than his earlier studio albums, although the mix is clean, the band is at its finest, and you can hear all the lyrics. Still, there are traces of that raw live sound that would have dominated, had this been recorded in the Austin Opry House or in a similarly loose atmosphere rather than in the ballroom of a casino. Yet *Willie And Family Live,* which contains no fewer than thirty-five songs, is the closest thing to a retrospective that he has ever done. It includes several of the standards he has written; almost a complete side of songs from the *Red Headed Stranger* LP; and also songs from virtually all of his previous Columbia and Atlantic LP's. There are also guest appearances by Johnny Paycheck (on Willie's version of Paycheck's recent chart-breaker, "Take This Job And Shove It") and Emmylou Harris. There are also two versions of "The Only Daddy That'll Walk The Line," which was Waylon Jenning's first number one record ten years ago. The album is highly recommended as a sampler to any

Willie Nelson newcomer. More than any previous album, it gives a well rounded picture of the quintessential Willie Nelson: his originality as a composer and his successful synthesis of various musical influences into his own style.

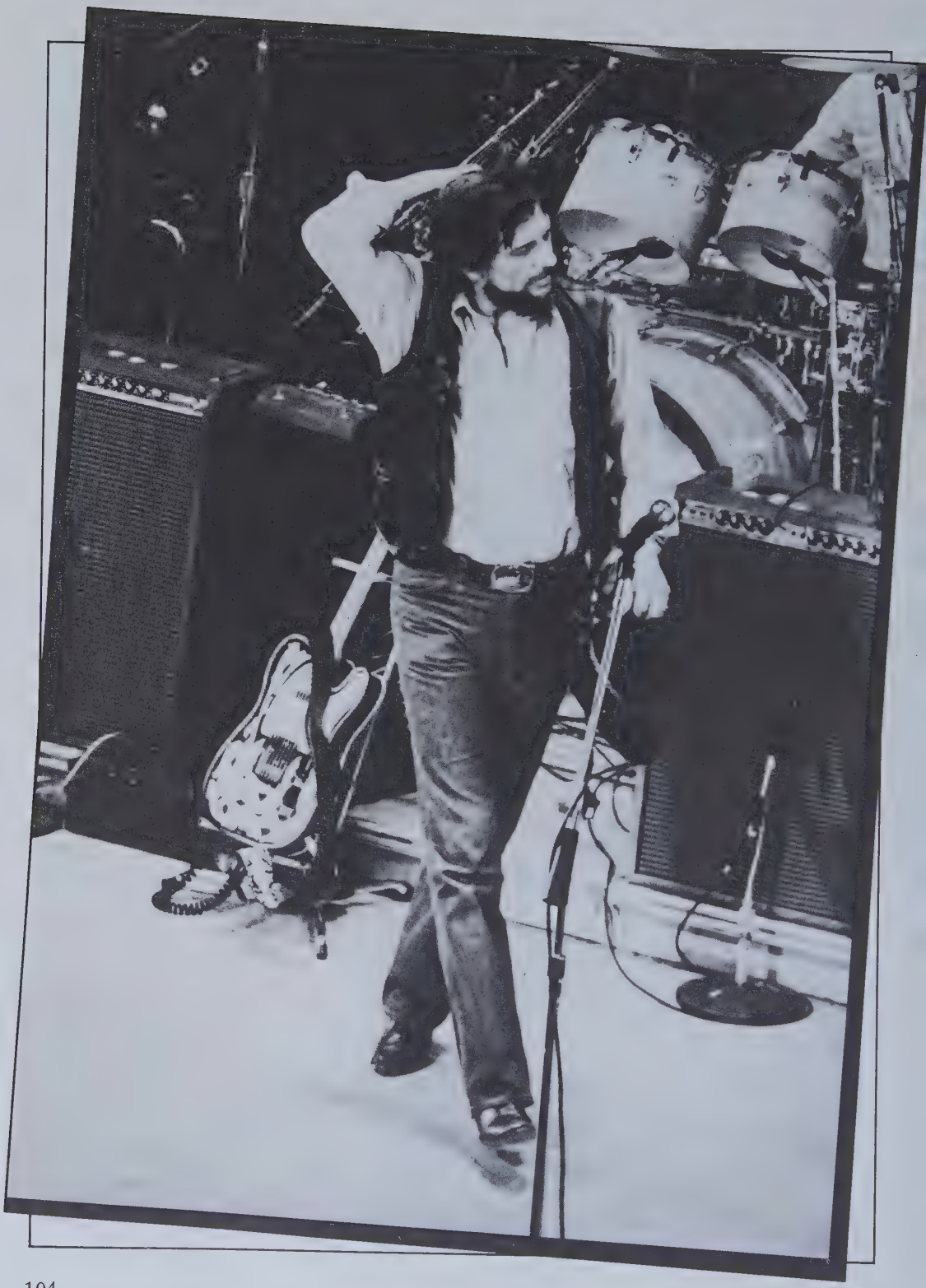
Willie's next studio LP, a collaboration with Leon Russell, will soon be released. What it includes is anybody's guess; but on a recent tour they did together, they shared vocals on everything from the fifties hit, "Detour," to "Heartbreak Hotel." "We spent about a week together out in California a while back," Willie told Michael Bane recently (*Country Music,* May, 1979), "and we did several songs—they're old standards; you'd know them all—everything from 'Riding Down The Canyon' to 'Tenderly' and 'Heartbreak Hotel'. Leon and I would sit down at the piano and I'd sing, and we did eighteen songs in one night. It was just kind of flowing real good. We'd just go through the books and find a song that we both knew and then we'd cut it. Most of those cuts are just one take."

In May, 1979, Willie had completed his tour with Leon and was back in Nashville, recording more solo tracks—enough for two albums. Many of the songs recorded were his early originals (he has hundreds of titles registered with various publishing companies.), as well as a many Kristofferson originals, which will surface on an album tentatively titled *Willie Nelson Sings Kristofferson.* According to a press release, the albums tentatively scheduled to come out of these sessions are another concept LP, *The Convict and The Rose,* (which has been on the back burner for over a year, and had an album cover commissioned before it was originally postponed), and an album of "typically Willie Nelson material" called *Ragged But Right.* In the summer of 1979, Willie was scheduled to record in Los Angeles. He is to work on a Christmas album which will include, among other standards, his original "Pretty Papers."

Whatever Willie records and releases these days, there are a lot more people listening than there ever were before—and he's glad to have it that way. As we await his future album releases, the only thing that is certain is that he has a lot of good years left, and he's bound to keep surprising us.

WILLIE IN SAN FRANCISCO.

[★]



Waylon Jennings: Musical Evolution

Chapter 13

WAYLON JENNINGS HAS ONE of the most powerful and emotive voices ever heard from among the ranks of country music artists. Although there are those who sing as well—Merle Haggard, George Jones, and ex-rock 'n' roller, Conway Twitty—most of these men are so deeply rooted in country influences, that they have neither the enthusiasm or intuitive understanding that it takes to interpret the wide range of contemporary music which Waylon is capable of handling. Waylon, for instance, whether he is singing an original like "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way?" or his version of "MacArthur Park," is capable of expressing a wide range of subtle emotional shadings—everything from anger, sadness, fear, irony, and even sarcasm. His voice is rich and overwhelming, and its capacity for emotion makes him one of the best there is.

Waylon has also developed over the years a sort of "stut-

tering, chicken-pickin' " electric lead guitar style of his own that does much to complement his vocal talents. It can be heard throughout the body of his work, from his early 1964 recordings, up to his recent *I've Always Been Crazy* LP.

Over the years, Waylon has also developed into a songwriter of considerable scope and talent. Though his original songs lack the endurance or universality of many of the songs from the early Willie Nelson catalog, they have nonetheless, supplied him with a number of hits, and they have been recorded by many other artists as well. While Willie has often written outside of the style of music in which he was most actively working (i.e. country music), Waylon, on the other hand, seems to use his writing talents to create songs that are perfectly tailored to his own unique personal style. They are often explicitly autobiographical. Among his major hits that he has written are: "I've Always Been Crazy," "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way?," "Don't You Think This Outlaw Bit's Done Got Out Of Hand," "Good Hearted Woman" (co-written with Willie Nelson), "Just To Satisfy You," "Anita, You're Dreaming," "This Time," "Rainy Day Woman," "So Good Woman," and "Bob Wills Is Still The King."

The Waylors, which Way-

lon works with on the road and in the studio, are yet another reason his music has the contemporary impact that it does. They are one of the most accomplished groups working in popular music today. Their sensibilities are solidly rooted in both country and rock, and they can mix the two up with a natural ease that becomes raw, exciting, earthy, yet comtemporary music. While many country road bands appear onstage as if they are about to doze off in the midst of a set, the Waylors bring to the stage the kind of pull-out-the-stops enthusiasm that is usually associated with rock bands.

Waylon grew up in West Texas in the midst of a crosswind of musical influences. Traditional strains of Texas and Nashville music dominated the country airwaves at that time. Yet the area around Lubbock, Texas (Littlefield, Waylon's hometown , is near Lubbock.) was producing some of the musicians who would soon be leaders in the new world of rock 'n' roll: the late Buddy Holly, Joe Ely, Buddy Knox, and Terry Nolan.

During his formative years in the late forties and early fifties, Waylon mostly heard the strains of Nashville artists Webb Pierce, Carl Smith, and Chet Atkins, as well as the more indigenous Texas honky-tonk sounds of Lefty Frizzell and Ernest Tubb. "My

mama and dad both played guitar and sang," he recalled, and ever since I could remember, I wanted to be a singer."

When he was still going to high school, Waylon met Buddy Holly at a Lubbock radio station where they had a special Sunday afternoon "talent show." Holly became the first of several talented musicians who recognized Waylon's incredible potential, took him under his wing, and subsequently influenced his musical development. "I'm sure Buddy had a lot of influence on my style," Jennings told Jon Bream of the *Minneapolis Star*, July 24, 1978. "I never went out to set a style of any kind, just to do it. It just came naturally, I guess, because I don't know anything about music. I just know about my music. I have to do it like I feel it."

Shortly before Holly was killed, he took Waylon into the Petty Recording Studios in Clovis, New Mexico, where they recorded two sides ("Jole Blon," a Cajun classic, and "When Sin Stops") for Trend Records (a small, Lubbock, Texas based label). The sides featured Holly producing and playing electric lead, and King Curtis on sax. Neither of the songs were the hits they hoped they would be. And Waylon did not go back into the studio until later, when he was back living in Lubbock again, and recorded a few more sides for Trend.

WAYLON HAS DEVELOPED INTO A SONG-WRITER OF SCOPE AND TALENT.

By 1964, Waylon was in Phoenix, Arizona, playing at J'D.'s Club, and the management wanted an album of Waylon's material. During one three-hour session, they recorded enough sides to fill an LP. *Waylon Jennings At J.D.'s* was issued on the small, local Sound Limited label, and was later, bought and re-released in 1969, on Vocalion, Decca's budget label. (Richie Albright, Waylon's long time drummer was already working with him at this point, and he can be heard on these cuts.)

Waylon's singing on many of these songs is restrained and he often seems to be trying to subdue his west Texas accent. Yet the awesome power of his voice is apparent, and it eclipses everything else. Most of the arrangements are sparse: little more than rhythm guitar, minimal drums, and a throbbing bass. (The title of the LP is misleading, since two of the songs are not sung by Waylon at all, and on a third, he is effectively drowned out by somebody else of lesser talent, who is singing harmony.) A high point of the album is a fine version of Bob Dylan's "Don't Think Twice," which is complemented by a soft, shadowy acoustic guitar, and by Waylon's booming, confident vocal. His lead guitar work is also heard on a number of cuts, and the early rock 'n' roll influences are obvious—especially on the band's parochial version of "Money

(That's What I Want)," the old Kingsmen hit. The lasting impression one is left with after listening to this album, is the way Waylon's presence as a vocalist eclipses the other musicians with whom he is working.

Waylon claims that it was the live club work that he did in Phoenix in the early sixties that really began to round him out as a performer. "Phoenix, Arizona is a weird town," he said a few years ago. "I worked there for several years. That's where I more or less developed everything—my way of thinking. It's still one of the most sophisticated country markets there is. . . .Like when I worked at a place called J.D.'s and Wild Bill's, the cross section we drew was unbelievable. We got long-haired people, lawyers, doctors, and all the cowboys. It was really a cross section of people because of the music that we played. We were predominantly country, and yet what I started doing was to take pop tunes or tunes that I felt I could relate to as a country person and play them."

It was in Phoenix that Waylon met Herb Alpert of A&M Records. Alpert recorded sides with Waylon both in Phoenix and Hollywood. As Waylon recalls humorously, "I think Herb wanted to make a pop star out of me."

WAYLON DURING INTERVIEW WITH JANE PAULEY.

[★]

Many of the sides from his A&M sessions were released in 1970 on the A&M LP, *Don't Think Twice.* (Several of the sides had been released as singles in the early sixties, but received little attention.) This album showcases Waylon's vocal talents which, by this time, had really matured. The arrangements on *Don't Think Twice* are markedly different from those on any of Waylon's later LP's: subdued electric guitars, slick background vocals, and even a dulcimer on the Jennings orginal, "Just To Satisfy You." The album includes fine versions of two Dylan songs, the title tune, and "I Don't Believe In You," as well as other early folk standards such as "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine," "House Of The Rising Sun," and "Four Strong Winds."

Folk-Country, Waylon's 1966 debut album on RCA, produced by Chet Atkins, in Nashville, has a markedly different feel to it. The arrangements are more lavish and "country-politan," with a piano, and smooth background singers. Unfortunately, the lilting soprano overtones in Waylon's voice are emphasized at the expense of the more powerful lows, which are underemphasized on most cuts.

Though Waylon tends to dismiss any redeeming qualities in the dozen or so albums he recorded for RCA throughout the sixties (before he gained artistic control), many of them are tastefully done and showcase him at his best. In addition to Chet Atkins, many of these LP's were co-produced or produced by Felton Jarvis, who was Elvis Presley's exclusive producer, until Elvis's death.

The approach to selecting material during these years, seems to have been rather eclectic. Waylon's albums from this era contain dozens of country gems already popu-

***LONESOME ON'RY AND MEAN* MARKED THE BEGINNING OF HIS TRANSITION.**

larized by other country artists of the day, as well as a smattering of folk and pop hits. (A 1968 LP entitled *Jewels* relies heavily on such country standards as Mel Tillis's "Mental Revenge," and Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues.")

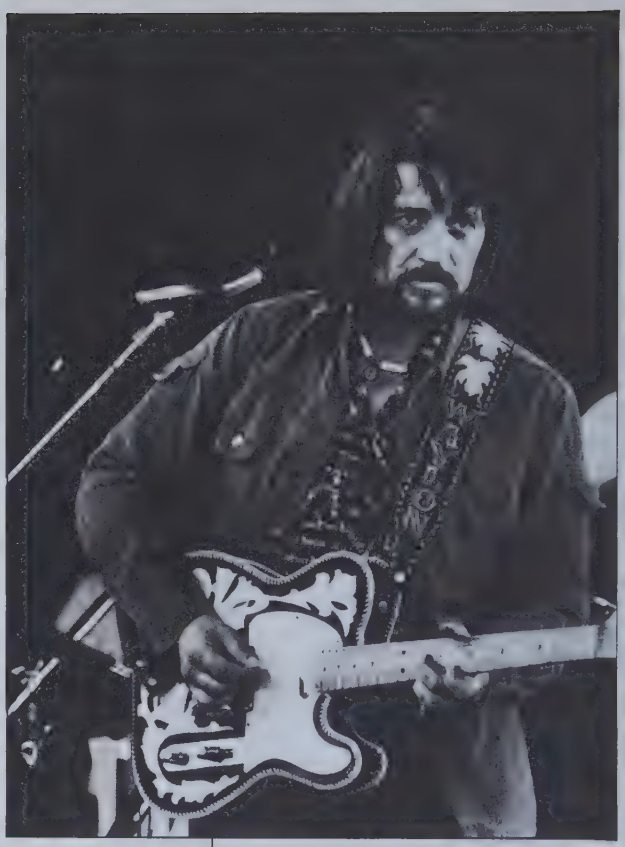
As late as 1969, Waylon and his producers still seemed to be straddling both sides of the market and striving for the best of the folk and country music markets. One remarkable album was the 1969 *Country-Folk Waylon And The Kimberleys.* The Kimberleys were a successful, folk vocal group similar to the New Christy Minstrels. This album includes a stunning version of Jimmy Webb's "MacArthur Park" (the song which won Waylon his first Grammy), as well as a number of other familiar modern folk tunes like "A World Of Our Own," and "Cindy Oh Cindy." The acoustic arrangements included heavy tambourine back beats and what sounds like twelve-string acoustic guitars. It was an experiment, slick and pleasing in some ways, but for Waylon, slightly off the track.

The first album that Waylon says he had some input into as a producer was his 1973 *Lonesome On'ry And Mean.* It marked the beginning of his transition into the current stages of his career. Gone was the clean-cut look he sported for most of the sixties; now his album covers pictured him

with a menacing looking goatee and hair that spilled over his collar. *The Lonesome On'ry And Mean* LP featured more than four producers on various tracks, therefore it is a very uneven LP. Some of the arrangements and productions that Waylon had a hand in, seem awkward and odd; he was not yet sure of himself as a producer. But *Lonesome On'ry And Mean* is redeemed by outstanding material written by prodigious new songwriters Steve Young, Mickey Newbury, Danny O'Keefe, Bill Ray Reynolds, and Kris Kristofferson.

Honky Tonk Heroes, Jennings' next LP again features four producers on the various tracks, including Waylon and Tompall Glaser. It is an excellent album—in terms of hard country, one of his finest. This is because it features the original songs of Billy Joe Shaver, who is a dying breed of *pure* country songwriter—one of the best to ever come along. Waylon is one of the best ones to interpret his powerful, rough-hewn material. Alongside Shaver's own debut album (on Monument Records), *Old Five and Dimers Like Me, Honky Tonk Heroes* is one of the finest albums to come out of Nashville in the early seventies.

This Time, Waylon's next album (1974), was produced by Willie Nelson. It is another solid album from this stage of his career. It features four Nelson originals, and Willie can also be heard playing lead guitar and singing harmony. Occasional flourishes of electric piano give the album a special flair. The arrangements are low-key, modest, and considerably more subdued than those on his previous two albums.



On his next LP, *The Ramblin' Man,* Waylon comes into his own; he is listed as full producer for the first time. The arrangements and accompaniments are handled by an effec-

tive mixture of top Nashville session musicians and the Waylors. The album is highlighted by excellent, spirited versions of "Rainy Day Woman," (a Jennings original), Bob McDill's "Amanda," Greg Allman's "Midnight Rider," as well as the title song.

Dreamin' My Dreams, Waylon's next album was produced by Waylon's ex-brother-in-law, veteran Nashville writer, producer, Jack Clement (who in his day, has produced such greats as Johnny Cash). To many, it marks a turning point for Waylon: the assimilation of his various musical influences into what is widely considered to be his best album ever. It features the haunting Jennings original, "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way," which is the closest thing that Waylon has to an anthem. Sweeping and powerful, this song sums up the frustration and desperation of Waylon's first decade in the music business. ("*Ten years on the road, makin' one-night stands/speedin' my young life away/. . .Tell me one more time so I'll understand/ Are you sure Hank done it this way?. . .*") It is as compelling and powerful a personal statement as almost any country or rock song that has ever been recorded. *Dreamin' My Dreams* includes other Jennings classics like "Waymore's Blues," "Let's All Help The Cowboys Sing The Blues," (written by Clement), and a raw, powerful live version of the Jennings original, "Bob Wills Is Still The King." The album is full of Waylon's provocative lead guitar work.

"ARE YOU SURE HANK DONE IT THIS WAY" IS THE CLOSEST THING THAT WAYLON HAS TO AN ANTHEM.

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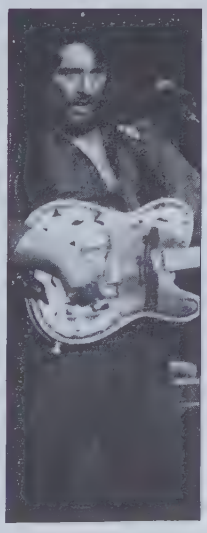
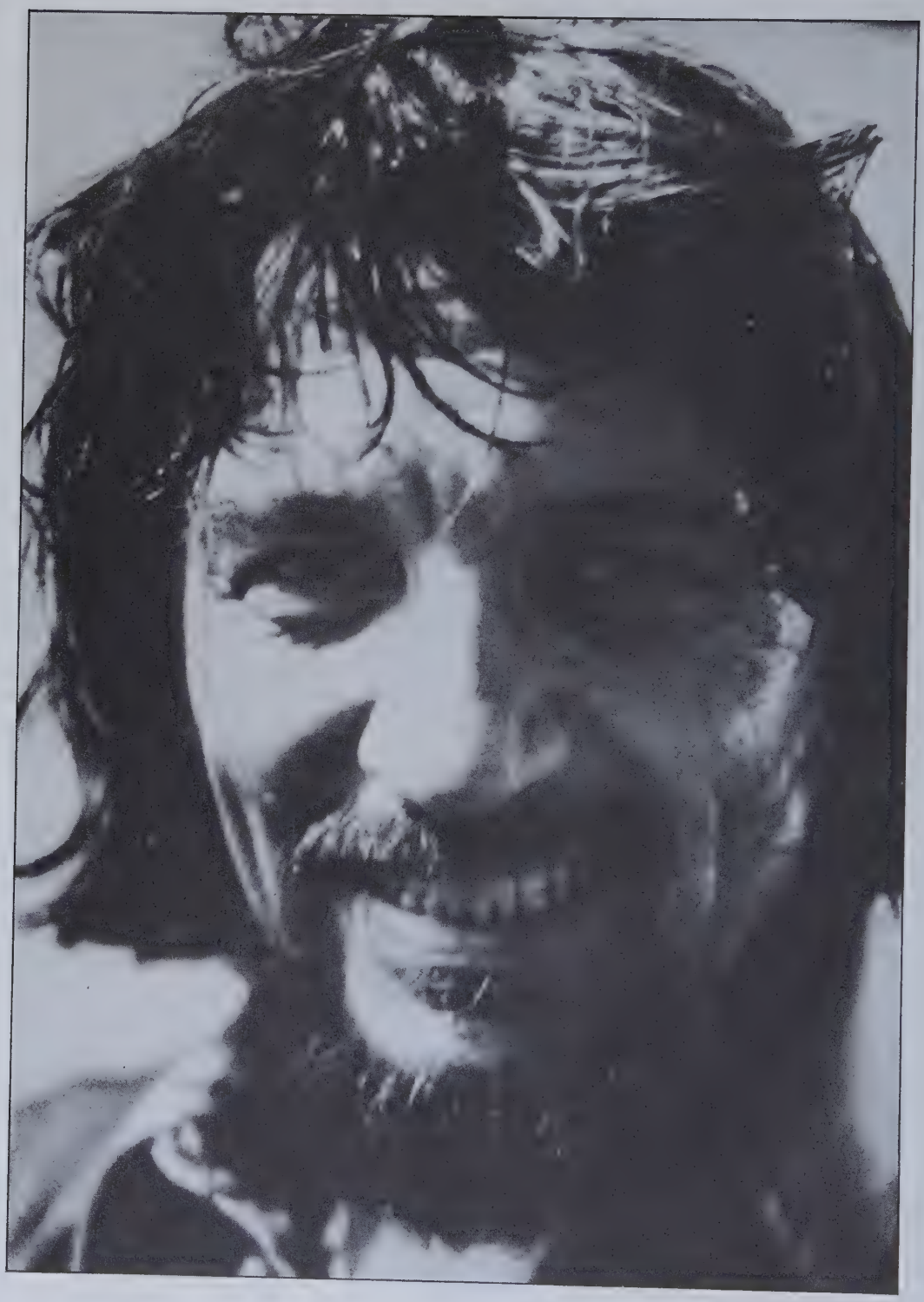


After the 1976 *Outlaws* LP, Waylon went to Hollywood's Sound Labs to record *Are You Ready For The Country,* his next studio LP. Waylon, along with Ken Mansfield shared co-production credits this time around. It is probably the most rock influenced album that Waylon has ever done, and ranks among his better studio efforts. Included is a boisterous version of the title song (written by Neil Young), and a Toy Caldwell (of the Marshall Tucker Band) original, "Can't You See," that conveys all of the emotional urgency and desperation that the song was meant to. *Are You Ready For The Country* includes an updated version of "MacArthur Park," and features guest vocals by Graham Nash.

Waylon's next release (originally recorded in various arenas in Texas in 1974) was the 1976, *Waylon Live* (produced by Waylon and Ray Pennington). It is a great live LP with hardly a bad cut on it. Nowhere is the vitality of the Waylors (highlighted with the excellent pedal steel guitar work of Ralph Mooney, another long time band member) showcased as it is on this album. Included are rousing versions of "Rainy Day Woman," "Ramblin' Man," "House Of The Rising Sun," and "Me



And Paul," (a Willie Nelson original).

The 1977 *Ol' Waylon* LP (produced by Chips Moman in Nashville) is only a slightly less exciting return to familiar territory. It features the classic, "Luckenbach, Texas" (on which Willie can be heard singing a chorus or two), which was written by Moman and Evans, a co-writer. *Ol' Waylon* is full of fine, diverse arrangements. Heavy electric guitars and drums give a strong rock feel to a few of the cuts, while others are handled with subdued country arrangements. Waylon has always had a weakness for recording other people's number one hits and it really surfaces on this LP. Included are his versions of the Kenny Rogers hit, "Lucille," and Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline." One pleasant surprise is a tribute to Elvis Presley in the form of a medley of his hits, "That Alright," and "My Baby Left Me."

In 1978, Waylon went to England to work on a collaboration called *White Mansions* (A&M, SP-6004). This was an ambitious project conceived and composed by Paul Kennerley, that was a musical docu-drama of the American Civil War, as seen through the progress of four characters. The sessions were produced and engineered by famed British producer, Glyn Johns, (the Rolling Stones) and it featured, in addition to Jennings, Jessi Colter, Bernie Leadon of the Eagles, Eric Clapton, and John Dillon and Steve Cash of the Ozark Mountain Daredevils. The result was an interesting, if not great commercially successful LP, which included a twenty-six page booklet of song lyrics and dozens of original photos of the Civil War as well.

"I'VE NEVER BEEN COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH ANY OF THEM—AND I HOPE I NEVER GET THAT WAY."

Waylon's next LP, released in late 1978, was the autobiographical *I've Always Been Crazy.* It was followed in early 1979 by the release of *Greatest Hits: Waylon,* which is an excellent sampler of Waylon's top hits from the last decade of his career.

As this is being written, Waylon is hard at work on a new studio LP, to be released in late 1979. Every time he goes into the studio, he seems to come up with new twists and turns in his musical development, as well as some surprises.As a musician, Waylon is restless and demanding on himself, and refuses to release what he considers mediocre material. (The release date for his next LP has already been moved back once, because he was unhappy with the new studio sessions he had thus far completed. As he recently remarked about his own LP's (he's recorded more than 35 of them in the course of his career, and supposedly has material for several more in the can already), "I've never been completely satisfied with any of them—and I hope I never get that way."

WILLIE NELSON: DISCOGRAPHY

Special Assistance from Bruce Adelman

AND THEN I WROTE
Liberty 3239
1962 (Out of Print)
Produced by Joe Allison

Touch Me
Wake Me When It's Over
Hello Walls
Funny How Time Slips Away
Crazy
The Part Where I Cry
Mr. Record Man
Three Days
One Step Beyond
Undo The Right
Darkness On The Face Of The Earth
Where My House Lives

HERE'S WILLIE NELSON
Liberty 7308
1963 (Out of Print)
Produced by Tommy Allsup

Feed It A Memory
Half A Man
The Way You See Me
Home Motel
The Last Letter
Let Me Talk To You
Lonely Little Mansion
Right Or Wrong
Roly Poly
Second Fiddle
Take My Word
The Things I Might Have Been

COUNTRY WILLIE—HIS OWN SONGS
RCA LSP-3418
1965 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

One Day At A Time
My Own Peculiar Way
Night Life
Funny How Time Slips Away
Healing Hands of Time
Darkness On The Face Of The Earth
Hello Walls
Are You Sure
Mr. Record Man
It Should Be Easier Now
So Much To Do
Within Your Crowd

COUNTRY FAVORITES—WILLIE NELSON STYLE
RCA LFT-3528
1966 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

Columbus Stockade Blues
Don't You Ever Get Tired
Fraulein
Go On Home
Heartaches By The Number
Home In San Antone
I Love You Because
Making Believe
My Window Faces South
San Antonio Rose
Seasons Of My Heart
I'll Trade All My Tomorrows

COUNTRY MUSIC CONCERT—WILLIE NELSON
RCA LFT-3659
1966 (Out of Print)
Produced by Felton Jarvis

Touch Me
Permanently Lonely
Something To Think About
Yesterday
The Last Letter
Mr. Record Man
My Own Peculiar Way
Half A Man
Hello Walls
I Just Can't Let You Say Goodbye
I Never Cared For You
Night Life
One Day At A Time
Opportunity To Cry

HELLO WALLS
Sunset 1138
1966 (Out of Print)
Produced by Tommy Allsup and Joe Allison

Hello Walls
Funny How Time Slips Away
Home Motel
Half A Man

Touch Me
Three Days
One Step Beyond
Take My Word
Lonely Little Mansion

MAKE WAY FOR WILLIE NELSON

RCA LSP-3748
1967 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins and Felton Jarvis

Make Way For A Better Man
Born To Lose
Have I Stayed Away Too Long
What Now My Love
You Make Me Live, Love And Die
Have I Told You Lately That I Love You
If It's Wrong To Love You
Lovin' Lies
Mansion On The Hill
Once In A Row
Some Other World
Teach Me To Forget

THE PARTY'S OVER

RCA LSP-3858
1967 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

The Party's Over
End Of Understanding
The Ghost
Go Away
Hold Me Tighter
I'll Stay Around
A Moment Isn't Very Long
No Tomorrow In Sight
Once Alone
Suffer In Silence
There Goes A Man
To Make A Long Story Short

TEXAS IN MY SOUL

RCA LSP-3937
1968 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

Texas In My Soul
Beautiful Texas
Dallas
The Hill Country Theme
Remember The Alamo
San Antonio
Streets Of Laredo
There's A Little Bit Of Everything In Texas
Waltz Across Texas
Who Put All My X's In Texas

GOOD OL' COUNTRY SINGIN'

CAL-SAS-2203
5.68 (Out of Print)

GOOD TIMES

RCA LSP-4057
1968 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins and Felton Jarvis

Good Times
December Day
Sweet Memories
Little Things
Pages
She's Still Gone
Ashamed
A Wonderful Yesterday
Permanently Lonely
Down To Our Last Goodbye
Buddy
Did I Ever Love You

MY OWN PECULIAR WAY

RCA LSP-4111
1969 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

My Own Peculiar Way
I Just Don't Understand
I Just Dropped by
I Let My Mind Wander
It Will Come To Pass
I Walk Alone
Local Memory
Any Old Arms Won't Do
Love Has A Mind Of Its Own
The Message
Natural To Be Gone
That's All

BOTH SIDES NOW (SWEET MEMORIES)

RCA LSP-4294
1970 (Out of Print)
Produced by Felton Jarvis

Both Sides Now
Bloody Mary Morning
Crazy Arms
Everybody's Talkin'
It Could Be Said That Way
Once More With Feeling
One Has My Name
Pins And Needles
Wabash Cannon Ball
Who Do I Know In Dallas

LAYING MY BURDENS DOWN

RCA LSP-4404
1970 (Out of Print)
Produced by Felton Jarvis

Laying My Burdens Down
Following Me Around
Happiness Lives Next Door
How Long Have You Been There
I Don't Feel Anything
I've Seen That Look On Me
Minstrel Man
Senses
When We Live Again
Where Do We Stand

COLUMBUS STOCKADE BLUES

CAF-2440
1970 (Out of Print)

Seasons Of My Heart
Columbus Stockade Blues
I Love You Because
Heartaches By The Number
San Antonio Rose
Go On Home
Fraulein
Don't You Ever Get Tired (Of Hurting Me)
I'd Trade All My Tomorrows (For Just One Yesterday)

WILLIE NELSON AND FAMILY

RCA LSP–4489
1971 (Out of Print)
Produced by Felton Jarvis

What Can You Do To Me Now
Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down
I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry
Fire And Rain
Kneel At The Feet Of Jesus
I'm A Memory
Yours Love
I Can Cry Again
That's Why I Love Her So
Today I Started Lovin' You Again

YESTERDAY'S WINE

RCA LSP-4568
1971 (Reissued in 1976 as RCA ANL1-1102 Stereo.)
Produced by Felton Jarvis

Introduction: Willie and Band
Medley: Where's The Show/ Let Me Be A Man
In God's Eyes
Family Bible
It's Not For Me To Understand
Meldey: These Are Difficult Times/ Remember The Good Times
Summer Of Roses
December Day
Yesterday's Wine
Me And Paul
Goin' Home

THE WORDS DON'T FIT THE PICTURE

RCA LSP-4653
1972 (Out of Print)
Produced by Felton Jarvis

The Words Don't Fit The Picture
Good Hearted Woman
Stay Away From Lonely Places
Country Willie
London
One Step Beyond
My Kind Of Girl
Will You Remember
Rainy Day Blues
If You Really Loved Me

THE WILLIE WAY

RCA LSP-4760
1972 (Out of Print)
Produced by Felton Jarvis

You Left A Long Long Time Ago
Wonderful Future
Help Me Make It Through The Night
Wake Me When It's Over
Undo The Right
Mountain Dew
Home Is Where You're Happy
A Moment Isn't Very Long
What Do You Want Me To Do
I'd Rather You Didn't Love Me

THE BEST OF WILLIE NELSON

United Artists LAO86F
1973

This is a re-release of the material that appeared on Willie's first album, on Liberty Records, *And Then I Wrote*

COUNTRY WINNERS BY WILLIE NELSON

Camden ACL1 0705
1973
Produced by Ethel Gabriel

Funny How Time Slips Away
Hello Walls
I Walk Alone
Mr. Record Man
My Own Peculiar Way
One Step Beyond
The Part When I Cry
Three Days
Touch Me

SHOTGUN WILLIE

Atlantic SD7262
1973
Produced by Jerry Wexler, Arif Mardin, and David Briggs

Shotgun Willie
Whiskey River
Sad Songs and Waltzes
Local Memory
Slow Down Old World
Stay All Night (Stay A Little Longer)
Devil In A Sleepin' Bag
She's Not For You
Bubble's In My Beer
You Look Like The Devil
So Much To Do

(Recorded in New York and Nashville, this LP features two tracks written by Leon Russell and special appearances by Waylon Jennings and David Bromberg.)

SPOTLIGHT ON WILLIE NELSON

Camden ACL1-0705
1974
Various producers (previously released material)

Bloody Mary Morning
Bring Me Sunshine
Everybody's Talkin'
I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry
One Has My Name
San Antonio
Today I Started Loving You Again
Wabash Cannon Ball
Yours Love

PHASES AND STAGES

Atlantic 7291
1974
Produced by Jerry Wexler

Phases And Stages (Theme)
Washing The Dishes
Phases And Stages (Theme)
Walkin'
Pretend I Never Happened
Sister's Coming Home
Down At The Corner Beer Joint

(How Will I Know) I'm Falling In Love Again
Bloody Mary Morning
Phases And Stages (Theme)
No Love Around
I Still Can't Believe You're Gone
It's Not Supposed To Be That Way
Heaven And Hell
Phases And Stages (Theme)
Pick Up The Tempo
Phases And Stages (Theme)

RED HEADED STRANGER

Columbia KC33482
1975
Produced and Arranged by Willie Nelson

Time Of The Preacher
I Couldn't Believe It Was True
Time Of The Preacher Theme
Medley: Blue Rock Montana/ Red Headed Stranger
Time Of The Preacher Theme
Just As I Am
Blue Eyes Cryin' In The Rain
Denver
O'er The Waves
Down Yonder
Can I Sleep In Your Arms
Remember Me
Hands On The Wheel
Bandera

WILLIE NELSON AND HIS FRIENDS

Plantation PLP-24
1975
(This LP includes tracks originally recorded by Willie Nelson in Houston, Texas, in 1959, 1960, and 1962. It also includes old tracks recorded by Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, and David Allan Coe.)

What A Way To Live (Nelson)
Misery Mansion (Nelson)
Rainy Day Blues (Nelson)
Night Life (Nelson)
Man With The Blues (Nelson)
The Storm Has Just Begun (Nelson)
Mississippi Woman (Coe)
West Virginia Man (Coe)
What'd I Say (Lewis)
Save The Last Dance For Me (Lewis)
Honey Don't (Perkins)
Blue Suede Shoes (Perkins)

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO ME

RCA AFL 1234
1975 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins and Felton Jarvis

What Can You Do To Me Now
Fire And Rain
I Gotta Get Drunk
I've Seen That Look On Me
Once More With Feeling
Permanently Lonely
Wake Me When It's Over
You Left A Long Long Time Ago

COUNTRY WILLIE

United Artists LA410G
1975 (Previously released material.)
Produced by Larry Butler

Country Willie
Columbus Stockade Blues
I Walk Alone
The Last Letter
Night Life
Right Or Wrong
Seasons Of My Heart
Take Me As I Am
There Goes A Man
There'll Be No Teardrops Tonight

THE OUTLAWS

RCA AFL-11321
1976
(With Waylon Jennings, Tompall Glaser, and Jessi Colter.)

(See Waylon Jennings Discography for complete list of tracks.)

THE SOUND IN YOUR MIND

Lone Star/Columbia 34092
1976
Produced and arranged by Willie Nelson

That Lucky Old Sun
If You've Got The Money I've Got The Time
A Penny For Your Thoughts
The Healing Hands Of Time
Thanks Again
I'd Have To Be Crazy
Amazing Grace
The Sound In Your Mind
Medley: Funny How Time Slips Away
Crazy
Night Life

COLUMBUS STOCKADE BLUES AND OTHER COUNTRY FAVORITES

Camden 7018
1976 (Previously released material.)

Columbus Stockade Blues
Don't You Ever Get Tired
Fraulein
Go On Home
Heartaches By The Number
I'll Trade All My Tomorrows
I Love You Because
San Antonio Rose
Seasons Of My Heart

WILLIE NELSON LIVE

RCA AFL-1487
1976 (One of these songs was previously released on the 1975 What Can You Do To Me Now *LP. The rest of these tracks were recorded in Panther Hall in Fort Worth, Texas in 1965, and first released on the 1965 RCA* Country Music Concert *LP.*
Produced by Felton Jarvis

Introduction
I Gotta Get Drunk (studio cut)
Medley: Mr. Record Man

Hello Walls
One Day At A Time
Last Letter
Half A Man
I Never Cared For You
Yesterday
Touch Me
Something To Think About
I Just Can't Let You Say Goodbye
How Long Is Forever
Medley: Opportunity To Cry
Permanently Lonely
My Own Peculiar Way

THE TROUBLEMAKER

Lone Star/Columbia KC 34112
1976
Produced by Arif Mardin

Uncloudy Day
When The Roll Is Called Up Yonder
Whispering Hope
There Is A Fountain
Will The Circle Be Unbroken
The Troublemaker
In The Garden
Where The Soul Never Dies
Sweet Bye And Bye
Shall We Gather
Precious Memories

WILLIE—BEFORE HIS TIME

RCA AFL-2210
1977 Remixed by Waylon Jennings and Richie Albright. All selections except "You Ought To Hear Me Cry" were previously released on earlier LP's.

One In A Row
I'll Trade All My Tomorrows (For Just One Yesterday)
She's Not For You
You Ought To Hear Me Cry
To Make A Long Story Short (She's Gone)
I'm A Memory
Stay Away From Lonely Places
It Should Be Easier Now
Little Things
How Long Have You Been There

TO LEFTY FROM WILLIE

Columbia 34695
1977
Produced and arranged by Willie Nelson

Mom and Dad's Waltz
Look What Thoughts Will Do
I Love You A Thousand Ways
Always Late (With Your Kisses)
I Want To Be With You Always
She's Gone Gone Gone
A Little Unfair
I Never Go Around Mirrors
That's The Way Love Goes
Railroad Lady

HELLO WALLS

Pickwick SPC3584
1978
(All material previously released on earlier RCA LP's,)

Half A Man
Hello Walls
Home Motel
Lonely Little Mansion
One Step Beyond
Take My Word
Three Days
Touch Me

WILLIE NELSON—1961

Shotgun LT-1961
(Double Album)
1977
Produced by Larry Trader
These tracks were recorded by Willie in 1961, and then laid away in a suitcase until they were rediscovered nearly 15 years later by his mother and father. The songs were evidently recorded as "demo" records to pitch for record company producers and song publishers.

Some Other Time
No Tomorrow In Sight
New Way To Cry
Pride Wins Again
The Shelter Of Your Arms
Blame It On The Times
Both Ends Of The Candle
Broken Promises
Country Willie
End Of Understanding
Everything But You
Face Of A Fighter
The Ghost
Happiness Lives Next Door
I'll Stay Around
I Hope So
I'm Going To Lose A Lot Of Teardrops
Is There Something On Your Mind
Let's Pretend
A Moment Is Not Very Long

STARDUST

Columbia 35305
1978
Produced and arranged by Booker T. Jones

Stardust
Georgia On My Mind
Blue Skies
All Of Me
Unchained Melody
September Song
On The Sunny Side Of The Street
Moonlight In Vermont
Don't Get Around Much Anymore
Someone To Watch Over Me

FACE OF A FIGHTER

Lone Star L4602
1978
This LP is a reissue of demo cuts that were originally recorded in Nashville in 1961. Contains practically all the same titles as were released on the 1977 reissue, Willie Nelson, 1961.

Face Of A Fighter

The Shelter Of Your Arms
The End Of Understanding
Is There Something On Your Mind
Some Other Time
Will You Remember Mine
Everything But You
I Hope So
A Moment Is Not Very Long
Blame It On The Times

THERE'LL BE NO TEARDROPS TONIGHT

United Artists LA930-H
1978
Tracks on this album were originally recorded during some of Willie's first master sessions for the now defunct Liberty label, which released Willie's first two albums. Two of the tracks on this LP had not been released previously: "Take Me As I Am," and "Blue Must Be The Color Of The Blues."

River Boy
I'll Walk Alone
Take Me As I Am (Or Let Me Go)
Tomorrow Night
Am I Blue
Take My Word
Home Motel
Blue Must Be The Color Of The Blues
There'll Be No Teardrops Tonight
Feed It A Memory

WILLIE AND FAMILY LIVE

Columbia 35642
1979
Produced by Willie Nelson
Recorded April, 1978 at Harrah's, Lake Tahoe, Nevada
(Double Album)

Whiskey River
Stay A Little Longer
Funny How Time Slips Away
Crazy
Night Life
If You've Got The Money I've Got The Time
Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys
I Can Get Off On You
If You Could Touch Her At All
Good Hearted Woman
Red Headed Stranger Medley: Time Of The Preacher / I Couldn't Believe It Was True
Medley: Blue Rock Montana / Red Headed Stranger
Blue Eyes Cryin' In The Rain
Red Headed Stranger/Just As I Am
Under The Double Eagle

Till I Gain Control Again
Bloody Mary Morning
I'm A Memory
Mr. Record Man
Hello Walls
One Day At A Time
Will The Circle Be Unbroken
Amazing Grace
Take This Job And Shove It
Uncloudy Day
The Only Daddy That'll Walk The Line
A Song For You
Roll In My Sweet Baby's Arms
Georgia On My Mind
I Gotta Get Drunk
Whiskey River
The Only Daddy That'll Walk The Line

SWEET MEMORIES

RCA AHL1-3243
1979
This LP consists entirely of tracks released earlier on previous RCA Willie Nelson albums.

Sweet Memories
Everbody's Talkin'
Wonderful Future
December Day
Help Me Make It Through The Night
Both Sides Now
Wake Me When It's Over
Little Things
Buddy
Will You Remember?

ONE FOR THE ROAD (Willie with Leon Russell)

CBS KC2 36064
1979
Produced by Willie Nelson and Leon Russell
(Double Album)

Detour
I Saw The Light
Heartbreak Hotel
Let The Rest Of The World Go By
Trouble In Mind
Don't Fence Me In
The Wild Side Of Life
Ridin' Down The Canyon
Sioux City Sue
You Are My Sunshine
Danny Boy
Always
Summertime
Because Of You
Am I Blue
Tenderly
Far Away Places
The Lucky Old Sun
Stormy Weather
One For My Baby And "One More For The Road"

Waylon Jennings: Discography

WAYLON JENNINGS AT JD'S
Sound Limited—1001
1964
(Most of these tracks were re-released in 1969 by Decca, on their budget label, Vocalion, on the LP, Waylon Jennings.)

Crying
Sally Was A Good Old Girl
Burning Memories
Big Mamou
Money (That's What I Want)
Don't Think Twice
Dream Baby
It's So Easy
Lorena
Love's Gonna Live Here
Abilene
White Lightnin'

FOLK COUNTRY
RCA LSP-3523
1966 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

Another Bridge To Burn
Stop The World (And Let Me Off)
Cindy Of New Orleans
Look Into My Teardrops
Down Came The World
I Don't Mind
Just For You
Now Everybody Knows
That's The Chance I'll Have To Take
What Makes A Man Wander
I'm A Man Of Constant Sorrow
What's Left Of Me

LEAVIN' TOWN
RCA LSP-3620
1966 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

Leavin' Town
Time To Bum Again
If You Really Want Me To I'll Go
Baby, Don't Be Looking In My Mind
But That's Alright
Time Will Tell The Story
You're Gonna Wonder About Me (That's What You Get) For Lovin' Me
Anita, You're Dreaming
Doesn't Anybody Know My Name
Falling For You
I Wonder Where I Went Wrong

NASHVILLE REBEL
RCA LSP-3736
1966 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins and Bob Ferguson
This LP is from the original soundtrack of the American International Film, Nashville Rebel *that starred Tex Ritter, and featured Waylon Jennings in a singing and acting role.*

Silver Ribbons
Nashville Bum
Green River
Nashville Rebel
I'm A Long Way From Home
Tennessee
Norwegian Wood
Hoodlum
Spanish Penthouse
Lang's Theme
Rush Street Blues
Lang's Mansion

WAYLON SINGS OL' HARLAN
RCA LSP-3660
1967 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

She Called Me Baby
Sunset And Vine
Woman, Let Me Sing You A Song
The Everglades
She's Gone, Gone, Gone
Busted
Beautiful Annabel Lee
Heartaches By The Numbers
Tiger By The Tail
Heartaches For A Dime
Foolin' 'Round
This Very Same Room

LOVE OF THE COMMON PEOPLE
RCA LSP-3825
1967 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

Money Can't Make The Man
Young Widow Brown
You've Got To Hide Your Love Away
Love Of The Common People
I Tremble For You
Destiny's Child
Ruby, Don't Take Your Love To Town
The Road
If The Shoe Fits
Don't Waste Your Time
Taos, New Mexico
Two Streaks Of Steel

THE ONE AND ONLY WAYLON JENNINGS
RCA CAS-2183
1967 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

Yes, Virginia
Dream Baby
You Beat All I Ever Saw
She Loves Me (She Don't Love You)
It's All Over Now
Born To Love You
Down Came The World
The Dark Side Of Fame
John's Back In Town
Listen, They're Playing My Song

HANGIN' ON
RCA LSP-3918
1968 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

Hangin' On
Julie
The Crowd
Let Me Talk To You
Woman, Don't You Ever Laugh At Me
The Chokin' Kind
Gentle On My Mind
Right Before My Eyes
Lock, Stock and Teardrops
I Fall In Love So Easily
Looking At A Heart That Needs A Home
How Long Have You Been There

ONLY THE GREATEST
RCA LSP-4023
1968 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

The Only Daddy That'll Walk The Line
California Sunshine
Weakness In A Man
Sorrow (Breaks A Good Man Down)
Christina
Such A Waste Of Love
Walk On Out Of My Mind
Kentucky Woman
Long Gone
You'll Think Of Me
Wave Goodbye To Me
Too Far Gone

JEWELS
RCA LSP-4085
1968 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

New York City, R.F.D.
Today I Started Loving You Again
Folsom Prison Blues
If You Were Mind To Lose
See You Around
Six Strings Away
Yours Love
How Much Rain Can One Man Stand
Mental Revenge
I'm Doing This For You
You Love The Ground I Walk On
My Ramona

JUST TO SATISFY YOU
RCA LSP-4137
1969 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins and Felton Jarvis

Lonely Weekends
Sing The Blues To Daddy
Change My Mind
Farewell Party
Rings Of Gold (with Anita Carter)
Alone
Just To Satisfy You
I Lost Me
I've Been Needing Someone Like You
For The Kids
I Got You
Straighten My Mind

WAYLON JENNINGS
Vocalion VL-73873
1969
Produced by Waylon Jennings
Previously released material: The tracks on this album were originally recorded December, 1964 in Phoenix, Arizona as a promotional record at JD's Supper Club. The entire session was recorded in three hours. The masters were later bought by Decca Records and released on their budget label, Vocalion.

Crying
Burning Memories
Big Mamon
Money (That's What I Want)
Don't Think Twice
Dream Baby (Sweet Dreams)
Lorena
Love's Gonna Live Here
Abilene
White Lightnin'

COUNTRY FOLK—WAYLON JENNINGS AND THE KIMBERLEYS
RCA LSP-4180
1969 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins

MacArthur Park
These New Changing Times
Come Stay With Me
Cindy Oh Cindy

Games People Play
Mary Ann Regrets
Let Me Tell You My Mind
Drivin' Nails In The Wall
Long Way Back Home
But You Know I Love You
A World Of Our Own

WAYLON

RCA LSP-4260
1970 (Out of Print)
Produced by Chet Atkins and Felton Jarvis

Brown Eyed Handsome Man
Just Across The Way
Don't Play The Game
Shutting Out The Lights
I May Never Pass This Way Again
The Thirty-Third Of August
Yellow Haired Woman
Where Love Has Died
All Of Me Belongs To You
Yes, Virginia
This Time Tomorrow (I'll Be Gone)

DON'T THINK TWICE

A&M SP-4238
1970 (Out of Print)
Produced by Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss
(This is a re-release of material Waylon recorded for A&M in the early sixties.)

Don't Think Twice
River Boy
Twelfth Of Never
The Race Is On
Stepping Stone
The Real House Of The Rising Sun
Just To Satisfy You
Kisses Sweeter Than Wine
Unchained Melody
I Don't Believe You
Four Strong Winds

JESSI COLTER: A COUNTRY STAR IS BORN

RCA LSP-4333
1970
Produced by Chet Atkins, Danny Davis, and Waylon Jennings
(This is Jessi Colter's first RCA album. It features a duet, and background singing and guitar work by Waylon.)

Too Many Rivers
Cry Softly
I Ain't The One
It's Not Easy
He Called Me Baby
Why You Been Gone So Long
If She's Where You Like Livin'
Healing Hands Of Time
That's The Chance I'll Have To Take
Don't Let Him Go
It's All Over Now

THE BEST OF WAYLON JENNINGS

RCA LSP-4341
1970
Produced by Chet Atkins and Danny Davis

Days Of Sand And Shovels
MacArthur Park
Delia's Gone
Walk On Out Of My Mind
Anita, You're Dreaming
The Only Daddy That'll Walk The Line
Just To satisgy you
I Got You
Something's Wrong In California
Ruby, Don't Take Your Love To Town

NED KELLY

United Artists UAS-5213B
1970 (Out of Print)
Produced by Ron Haffleine
This album is the original motion picture score from the film Ned Kelly *starring Mick Jagger. It was recorded in the A&R Studios, in New York City. Words and music were written by Shel Silverstein. In addition to Waylon, some of the cuts are sung by Kris Kristofferson and Tom Ghent.*

Ned Kelley (Waylon)
The Wild Colonial Boy (Jagger)
Song Of A Scoundrel (Kristofferson)
Shadows Of The Gallows (Waylon)
Stoney Cold Ground (Kristofferson)
The Kellys Keep Acomin' (Kristofferson)
Ranchin' In The Evenin' (Waylon)
Blame It On The Kelleys (Waylon)
Pleasures Of A Sunday Afternoon (Waylon)
Hey Ned (Ghent)

SINGER OF SAD SONGS

RCA LSP-4418
1970
Produced by Lee Hazlewood

Singer of Sad Songs
(Produced by Danny Davis)
Sick And Tired
Time Between Bottles Of Wine
Must You Throw Dirt In My Face
No Regrets
Ragged But Right
Honky Tonk Woman
She Comes Running
If I Were A Carpenter
Donna On My Mind
Rock, Salt And Nails

THE TAKER/TULSA

RCA LSP-4487
1971
Produced by Danny Davis and Ronnie Light

The Taker
You'll Look For Me
Mississippi Woman
Lovin' Her Was Easier (Than

Anything I'll Ever Do Again)
Six White Horses
(Don't Let The Sun Set On You) Tulsa
Casey's Last Ride
A Legend In My Time
Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down
Grey Eyes You Know

CEDARTOWN, GEORGIA

RCA LSP-4567
1971
Produced by Chet Atkins, Danny Davis and Ronnie Light

Cedartown, Georgia
Big D
The House Song
Tomorrow Night In Baltimore
Pickin' White Gold
Bridge Over Troubled Water (with Jessi Colter)
IT's All Over Now
I'm Gonna Leave
I've Got Eyes For You
Let Me Stay Awhile

GOOD HEARTED WOMAN

RCA LSP-4647
1972
Produced by Ronnie Light, Chet Atkins, and Danny Davis. (Liner notes by Willie Nelson)

Good Hearted Woman
The Same Old Lover Man
One Of My Bad Habits
Willie And Laura Mae Jones
It Should Be Easier Now
Do No Good Woman
Unsatisfied
I Knew You'd Be Leavin'
Sweet Dream Woman
To Beat The Devil

HEARTACHES BY THE NUMBER

RCA CAS-2556
1972

Heartaches By The Number
Tiger By The Tail
Foolin' Around
For Lovin' You
You're Gonna Wonder About Me
Folsom Prison Blues
Busted
Time to Bum Again
Leavin' Town

GET INTO WAYLON JENNINGS

RCA SPS-33-570
5.72
Various producers (Special promotional album, consisting of previously released tracks. Not released to the general public.)

Norwegian Wood
Love Of The Common People
The Chokin' Kind
The Only Daddy That'll Walk The Line
Brown Eyed Handsome Man
MacArthur Park
The Thirty Third Of August
Singer Of Sad Songs
Honky Tonk Woman
If I Were A Carpenter
The Taker
Tomorrow Night In Baltimore
Lovin' Her Was Easier
Casey's Last Ride
Good Hearted Woman
Do No Good Woman

LADIES LOVE OUTLAWS

RCA LSP-4751
1972
Produced by Ronnie Light

Ladies Love Outlaws
Never Been To Spain
Sure Didn't Take Him Long
Crazy Arms
Revelation
Delta Dawn
Frisco Depot
Thanks
I Think It's Time She Learned
Under Your Spell Again (Duet with Jessi Colter)

RUBY, DON'T TAKE YOUR LOVE TO TOWN

Camden CAS-2608
1973
Various producers (Previously released material.)

Just To Satisfy You
Gentle On My Mind
Ruby, Don't Take Your Love To Town
Leavin' Town
Yours Love
New York City R.F.D.
Hangin' On
Today I Started Lovin' You Again
Time To Bum Again

LONESOME, ON'RY AND MEAN

RCA LSP-4854
1973 Produced by Waylon Jennings, Ronnie Light, and Danny Davis

Lonesome, On'ry and Mean
Lay It Down
Freedom To Stay
Gone To Denver
Good Time Charlie's Got The Blues
You Can Have Her
San Francisco Mabel Joy
Me And Bobby McGee
Pretend I Never Happened
Sandy Sends Her Best

HONKY TONK HEROES

RCA APL1-0240
1973
Produced by Wayon Jennings, Tompall Glaser, Ronnie Light, and Ken Mansfield

Honky Tonk Heroes
Old Five and Dimers
Willy The Wandering Gypsy And Me
Low Down Freedom
Omaha
You Ask Me To
Ride Me Down Easy
Ain't No God In Mexico

Black Rose
We Had It All

THIS TIME
RCA APL1-0539
1974
Produced by Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson

This Time
Louisiana Women
Pick Up The Tempo
Slow Rollin' Low
Heaven or Hell
It's Not Supposed To Be That Way
Slow Movin' Outlaw
Mona
Walkin'
If You Could Touch Her At All

ONLY DADDY THAT'LL WALK THE LINE
Camden ACL-0306
1974
Various producers
(Previously releaste material that has been remastered.)

Only Daddy That'll Walk The Line
California Sunshine
Stop The World (And Let Me Off)
Let Me Talk To You
Nashville Bum
Money Cannot Make The Man
Another Bridge To Burn
See You Around (On Your Way Down)
Rings Of Gold

WAYLON, THE RAMBLIN' MAN
RCA APL1-0734
1974
Produced by Waylon Jennings

I'm A Ramblin' Man
Rainy Day Woman
Cloudy Days
Midnight Rider
Oklahoma Sunshine
The Hunger
I Can't Keep My Hands Off You
Memories Of You And I
It'll Be Her
Amanda

DREAMIN' MY DREAMS
RCA APL1-1062
1975
Produced by Waylon Jennings and Jack Clement
(Liner notes by Neil Diamond)

Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way
Waymore's Blues
I Recall A Gypsy Woman
High Time (You Quit Your Low Down Ways)
I've Been A Long Time Leaving (But I'll Be A Long Time Gone)
Let's All Help The Cowboys Sing The Blues
The Door Is Always Open
Let's Turn Back The Years
She's Looking Good
Dreaming My Dreams With You
Bob Wills Is Still The King

THE OUTLAWS
RCA APL1-1321
1976
(with Willie Nelson, Jessi Colter, and Tompall Glaser)

My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys
Honky Tonk Heroes
I'm Looking For Blue Eyes (Colter)
You Mean To Say (Colter)
Suspicious Minds (Waylon and Colter)
Good Hearted Woman (Waylon and Willie)
Heaven or Hell (Waylon and Willie)
Me And Paul (Willie)
Yesterday's Wine (Willie)
T For Texas (Glaser)
Put Another Log On The Fire (Glaser)

MACKINTOSH & T.J.
RCA APL1-1520
1976
Produced by Waylon Jennings and Richie Albright
(This LP is the soundtrack of Mackintosh & T.J. *which starred Roy Rogers. In addition to Waylon, it includes instrumentals by the Waylors, and one track by Willie Nelson.)*

All Around Cowboy (Waylon)
Back In The Saddle (instrumental)
Ride Me Down Easy (Waylon)
Gardenia Waltz (instrumental)
Bob Wills Is Still The King (Waylon)
Shopping (instrumental)
Stay A Little Longer (Willie) *(Produced by Jerry Wexler, Arif Mardin and David Briggs)*
Crazy Arms (instrumental)
All Around Cowboy (Waylon)

ARE YOU READY FOR THE COUNTRY
RCA APL1-1816
1976
Produced by Waylon Jennings and Ken Mansfield

Are You Ready For The Country
Them Old Love Songs
So Good Woman
Jack A Diamonds
Can't You See
MacArthur Park (Revisited)
I'll Go Back To Her
A Couple More Years
Old Friend
Precious Memories

THE DARK SIDE OF FAME
Camden ACL-7019

1976
(The material on this Lp was previously released as The One And Only Waylon Jennings (CAS-2183) in 1967.)

WAYLON "LIVE"
RCA APL1-1108
1976
Produced by Waylon Jennings and Ray Pennington

T For Texas
Rainy Day Woman
Me And Paul
The Last Letter
I'm A Ramblin' Man
Bob Wills Is Still The King
Pick Up The Tempo
Good Hearted Woman
House Of The Rising Sun
Me And Bobby McGee
This Time

OL' WAYLON
RCA APL1-2317
1977
Produced by Chips Moman

Luckenbach, Texas (vocals with Willie)
If You See Me Getting Smaller
Lucille
Sweet Caroline
I Think I'm Gonna Kill Myself
Belle Of The Ball
Medley of Elvis Hits
Till I Gain Control Again
Brand New Goodbye Song
Satin Sheets
This Is Getting Funny (But There Ain't Nobody Laughing)

WAYLON AND WILLIE
(with Willie Nelson)
RCA AFL1-2686
1978

Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys
The Year 2003 Minus 25
Pick Up The Tempo
If You Can Touch Her At All
Lookin' For A Feeling
It's Not Supposed To Be That Way
I Can Get Off On You
Don't Cuss The Fiddle
Gold Dust Woman
A Couple More Years
The Wurlitzer Prize (I Don't Want To Get Over You)

WHITE MANSIONS
A&M SP-6004
1978
Produced and engineered by Gyn Johns. Appearances by Eric Clapton, Bernie Leadon, Dave Markee, Henry Spinetti, and Tim Hinkley.

Story To Tell
Dixie, Hold On
Join Around The Flag
White Trash:
The Last Dance And The Kentucky Race Horse
Southern Boys
The Union Mare & The Confederate Grey
No One Would Believe A Summer Could Be So Cold
The Southland's Bleeding
Bring Up The Twelve Pounders
They Laid Waste To Our Land
Praise The Lord
The King Has Called Me Home
Bad Man
Dixie, Now You're Done

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN CRAZY
RCA AFL1-2979
1978
Produced by Richie Albright and Waylon Jennings

I've Always Been Crazy
Don't You Think This Outlaw Bit's Done Got Out Of Hand
Billy
A Long Time Ago
As The Billy World Turns
Medley of Buddy Holly Hits *(produced by Duane Eddy, featuring the original Crickets)*
I Walk The Line
Tonight The Bottle Let Me Down
Girl I Can Tell (You're Trying To Work It Out)
Whistlers And Jugglers

GREATEST HITS
RCA AHL1-3378
1978
(Also available in picture disc: CPL1-3406.)

Honky Tonk Heroes
Lonesome On'ry And Mean
Amanda
Only Daddy That'll Walk The Line
Ladies Love Outlaws
Good Hearted Woman
I've Always Been Crazy
Luckenbach, Texas (Back To The Basics Of Life)
Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To be Cowboys
I'm A Ramblin' Man
Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way

Picture Credits

2-3	David Gahr
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58	Wide World Photos
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79	Chuck Pulin
80	Charlyn Zlotnik
82	Wide World Photos
83	Richard E. Aaron
84	Charlyn Zlotnik
85	Larry White
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90	Wide World Photos
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93	Jeffrey Mayer
94 -95	David Gahr
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97	Charlyn Zlotnik
99	Charlyn Zlotnik
100	Columbia
101	Charlyn Zlotnik
102	Allan Arpadi, Black Star
103	Charlyn Zlotnik
104	Larry White
106	Alfieri
107	Charlyn Zlotnik
108	Chuck Pulin
109	Larry White
110 1	Charlyn Zlotnik
112	Larry White
113	Joseph Sia
114	Larry White

Music

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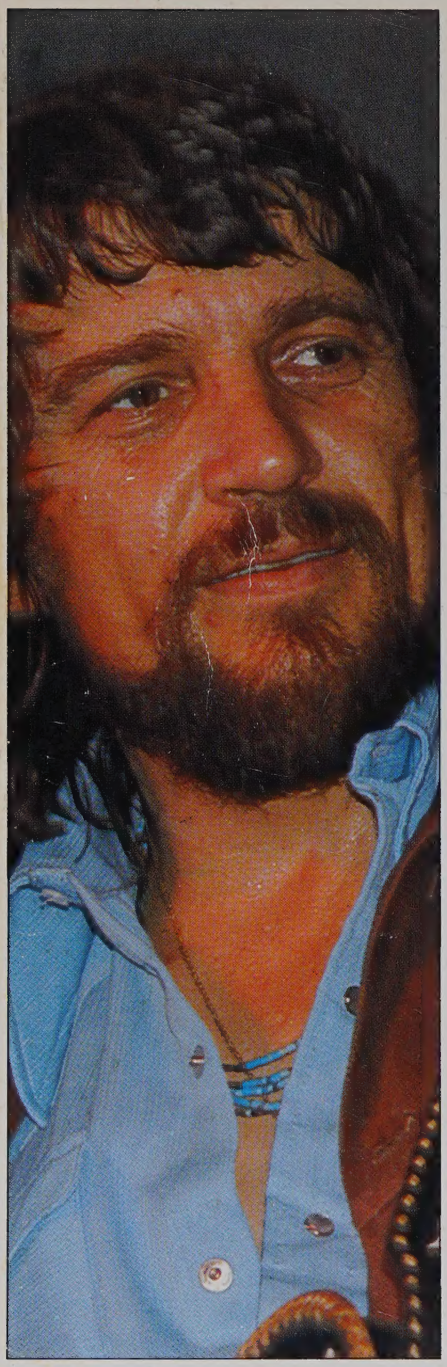
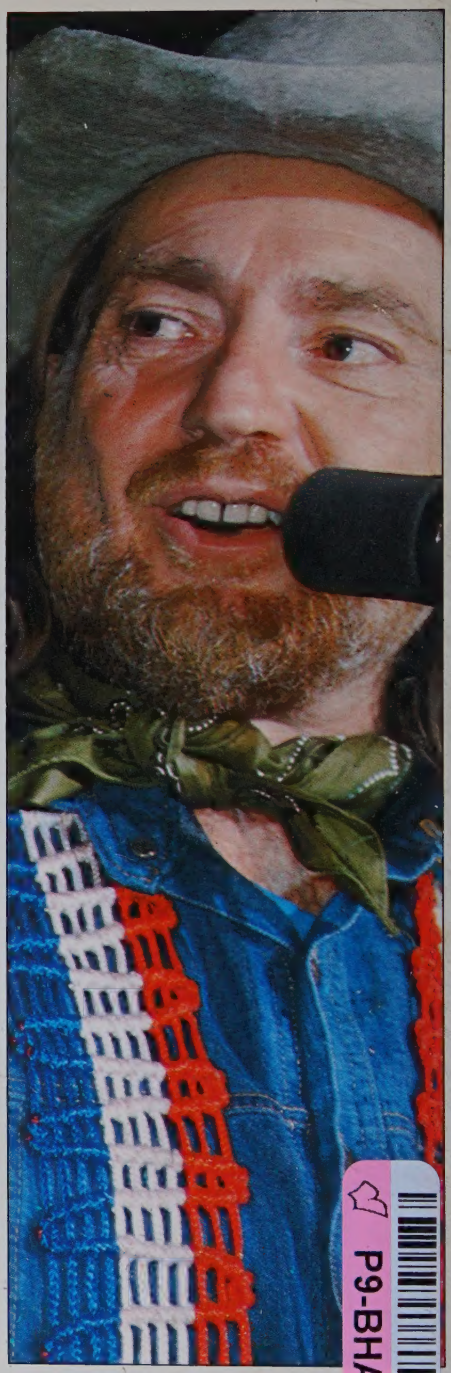
WAYLON & WILLIE



Few singers have struck as responsive a chord with millions of people as Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson. Hardly overnight successes, they have traveled a few more roads than most, sometimes together, sometimes alone, and like fine wine, they are getting better all the time. Their songs are many times autobiographical and between them they have changed the sound of American music with their own brand of progressive country. Here for the first time is the full story of Waylon & Willie.



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